INTRODUCING SOCIOLOGY

TEXTBOOK FOR CLASS XI

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11104

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

Reprint 2026-27

11104 – INTRODUCING SOCIOLOGY
Textbook for Class XI

ISBN 81-7450-533-4

First Edition
March 2006 Phalguna 1927

Reprinted
December 2007 Agrahayana 1929
December 2008 Pausa 1930
January 2010 Magha 1931
January 2011 Magha 1932
March 2012 Phalguna 1933
April 2013 Chaitra 1935
March 2014 Phalguna 1935
January 2015 Magha 1936
December 2015 Agrahayana 1937
December 2016 Kartika 1938
December 2017 Pausa 1939
January 2019 Pausa 1940
August 2019 Bhadrapada 1941
February 2021 Magha 1942
July 2021 Asadha 1943
November 2021 Kartika 1943
October 2022 Kartika 1944
March 2024 Chaitra 1946
June 2024 Jyaishtha 1946
January 2025 Pausha 1946

PD 75T GS

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₹ 50.00

Printed on 80 GSM paper with NCERT watermark

Published at the Publication Division by the Secretary, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 016 and printed at Chandu Press, 469, Patparganj Industrial Estate, Delhi–110092

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Foreword

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

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The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory group in Social Sciences, Professor Hari Vasudevan and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor Yogendra Singh for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi
20 December 2005

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Council of Educational Research and Training acknowledges Karuna Chanana, *Professor* (Retd.), Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Abha Awasthi, *Professor* (Retd.), Department of Sociology, Lucknow University, Lucknow; Madhu Nagla, *Lecturer*, Department of Sociology, Mahrishi Dayanand University, Rohtak; Disha Nawani, *Lecturer,* Gargi College, New Delhi; Vishvaraksha, *Professor*, Department of Sociology, University of Jammu, Jammu; Sudershan Gupta, *Principal*, Govertment Higher Secondary School, Paloura, Jammu; Mandeep Chaudhary, *PGT (Retd.) Sociology*, Guru Harkishan Public School, New Delhi; Rita Khanna, *PGT Sociology*, Delhi Public School, New Delhi; Seema Banerjee, *PGT Sociology,* Laxman Public School, New Delhi; Madhu Sharan, *Project Director,* Hand-in-Hand, Chennai; Balaka Dey, *Programme Associate,* United Nations Development Programme, New Delhi; Niharika Gupta, *Freelance Editor*, New Delhi; Jesna Jayachandaran, *Research Scholar*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi for providing their feedback and inputs.

Acknowledgements are due to Savita Sinha, former *Professor* and *Head*, Department of Education in Social Sciences for her support.

The Council expresses gratitude to Jan Breman and Parthiv Shah for using photographs from their book, *Working in the mill no more*, published by Oxford University Press, Delhi. Some photographs were taken from the Department of Tourism, Government of India, New Delhi; National Museum, New Delhi; *The Times of India*, *The Hindu, Outlook* and *Frontline*. The Council thanks the authors, copyright holders and publishers of these reference materials. The Council also acknowledges the Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi for allowing to use photographs available in their photo library. Some photographs were given by John Suresh Kumar, Synodical Board of Social Service; J. John of *Labour File*, New Delhi; V. Suresh Chennai and R.C. Das of Central Institute of Educational Technology, NCERT, New Delhi. The Council acknowledges their contribution.

Special thanks are due to Vandana R. Singh, *Consultant Editor*, NCERT for going through the manuscript and suggesting relevant changes.

The Council also gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Mamta, *DTP Operator*; Shreshtha, *Proof Reader* and Dinesh Kumar, *Incharge,* Computer Station in shaping this book. We are also grateful to Publication Department, NCERT for all their support.

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A Note to the Teachers and Students

This book is an introductory invitation to sociology. It is not meant to be a comprehensive and exhaustive account of the discipline. Instead it seeks to give a sense of what sociology does and how it helps us understand both society and our own lives better. The book hopes to familiarise students with the sociological perspective, its concepts and tools of research. It seeks to show how sociology as a discipline engages with the fact that each of us, as members of society have commonsensical ideas and understandings about society. How is sociology as a body of knowledge distinguishable from the body of common sense knowledge that necessarily exists in society? Is it distinguishable by its method and approach? Is it different because it continuously asks critical questions, because it accepts nothing as taken for granted?

We could keep adding many more such questions. For sociology is a subject that trains us to question and understand why and how society functions the way it does. And hence there is a need to be clear about the terms and concepts that sociology uses, for they are necessary tools in our sociological understanding.

Apart from the critical perspective that sociology entails, it is also marked by diverse and contending approaches. This plurality is its strength. The different views within sociology about society can be fruitfully understood as debates. Debates often help us understand a phenomena better.

In keeping with the questioning and plural spirit of sociology, the book continuously engages with the reader to think and reflect, to relate what is happening to society and to us as individuals. The activities built into the text are therefore an intrinsic part of the book. The text and activities constitute an integrative whole. One cannot be done without the other. For the objective here is not just to provide ready made information about society but to understand society.

Society itself is plural, diverse and unequal. The book seeks to capture this complexity in each of the chapters. Both examples and activities seek to bring this in. The activities are therefore, essential part of the text. Yet like all books, this is just a beginning. And much of the most exciting learning process will take place in the classroom. Students and teachers will perhaps think of far better ways, activities and examples and suggest how textbooks can be bettered.

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THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [1]**[SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC]** and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the [2][unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

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1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)

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Chapter 1

Sociology and Society

I

Introduction

Let us begin with some suggestions that are often made to young students like you. One advice often made is, "Study hard and you will do well in life." The second advice as often made is, " If you do this subject or set of subjects you will have a better chance of getting a good job in the future". The third could be, " As a boy this does not seem a correct choice of subject" or "As a girl, do you think your choice of subjects is a practical one?" The fourth, "Your family needs you to get a job soon so why choose a profession that will take a very long time" or "You will join your family business so why do you wish to do this subject?"

Let us examine the suggestions. Do you think the first advice contradicts the other three? For the first advice suggests that if you work very hard, you will do very well and get a good job. The onus rests upon the individual. The second advice suggests that apart from your individual effort, there is a job market that decides which subject choice may increase or decrease your chances in the job market. The third and fourth advice complicate the matter even more. It is not just our personal effort or just the job market that makes a difference — our gender and family or social background also matter.

Individual efforts matter a great deal but do not necessarily define outcomes. As we saw there are other social factors that play an important role in the final outcome. Here we have only mentioned the 'job market', the 'socioeconomic background' and 'gender'. Can you think of other factors? We could well ask, "Who decides what is a 'good job'?" Do all societies have similar notions of what is a "good job?" Is money the criteria? Or is it respect or social recognition or individual satisfaction that decides the worth of a job? Do culture and social norms have any role to play?

The individual student must study hard to do well. But how well h/she does is structured by a whole set of societal factors. The job market is defined by the needs of the economy.

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The needs of the economy are again determined by the economic and political policies pursued by the government. The chances of the individual student are affected both by these broader political and economic measures as well as by the social background of her/his family. This gives us a preliminary sense of how sociology studies human society as an interconnected whole. And how society and the individual interact with each other. The problem of choosing subjects in the senior secondary school is a source of personal worry for the individual student. That this is a broader public issue, affecting students as a collective entity is self evident. One of the tasks of sociology is to unravel the connection between a personal problem and a public issue. This is the first theme of this chapter.

We have already seen that a 'good job' means different things to different societies. The social esteem that a particular kind of job has or does not have for an individual depends on the culture of his/her 'relevant society'. What do we mean by 'relevant society'? Does it mean the 'society' the individual belongs to? Which society does the individual belong to? Is it the neighbourhood? Is it the community? Is it the caste or tribe? Is it the professional circle of the parents? Is it the nation? Second, this chapter therefore looks at how the individual in modern times belongs to more than one society. And how societies are unequal.

Third, this chapter introduces sociology as a systematic study of society, distinct from philosophical and religious reflections, as well as our everyday common sense observation about society. Fourth, this distinct way of studying society can be better understood if we look back historically at the intellectual ideas and material contexts within which sociology was born and later grew. These ideas and material developments were mainly western but with global consequences. Fifth, we look at this global aspect and the manner in which sociology emerged in India. It is important to remember that just as each of us have a biography, so does a discipline. Understanding the history of a discipline helps understand the discipline. Finally the scope of sociology and its relationship to other disciplines is discussed.

II

The Sociological Imagination: the Personal Problem and the Public Issue

We began with a set of suggestions that drew our attention to how the individual and society are dialectically linked. This is a point that sociologists over several generations have been concerned with. C. Wright Mills rests his vision of the sociological imagination precisely in the unravelling of how the personal and public are related.

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Activity 1

Read the text from Mills carefully. Then examine the visual and report below. Do you notice how the visual is of a poor and homeless couple? The sociological imagination helps to understand and explain homelessness as a public issue. Can you identify what could be the causes for homelessness? Different groups in your class can collect information on possible causes for example, employment possibilities, rural to urban migration, etc. Discuss these. Do you notice how the state considers homelessness as a public issue that requires concrete measures to be taken, for instance, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna–Gramin?

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and promise... Perhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between 'the personal troubles of the milieu' and 'the public issues of social structure'... Troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others; they have to do with his self and with those limited areas of social life of which he is directly and personally aware... Issues have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of his inner life.

The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and the failure of individual men and women. When a society is industrialised, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both... (Mills 1959).

A homeless couple

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna–Gramin, operationalised from 2016 is a major scheme by the Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) provides financial and labour support to houseless families and those living in dilapidated kutcha houses to build pucca houses. Can you think of other issues that show the connection between personal problems and public issues?

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III

Pluralities and inequalities among societies

In the contemporary world we belong, in a sense, to more than one 'society'. When amidst foreigners reference to 'our society' may mean 'Indian society', but when amongst fellow Indians we may use the term 'our society' to denote a linguistic or ethnic community, a religious or caste or tribal society.

This diversity makes deciding which 'society' we are talking about difficult. But perhaps this difficulty of mapping society is not confined to sociologists alone as the comment below will show.

While reflecting on what to focus on in his films, the great Indian film maker Satyajit Ray wondered:

> What should you put in your films? What can you leave out? Would you leave the city behind and go to the village where cows graze in the endless fields and the shepherd plays the flute? You can make a film here that would be pure and fresh and have the delicate rhythm of a boatman's song.
> Or would you rather go back in time-way back to the Epics, where the gods and demons took sides in the great battle where brothers killed brothers...
> Or would you rather stay where you are, right in the present, in the heart of this monstrous, teeming, bewildering city, and try to orchestrate its dizzying contrasts of sight and sound and milieu?

This question of what to focus in society is indeed central to sociology. We can take Satyajit Ray's comments further and wonder whether his depiction of the village is romantic. It would be interesting to contrast this with a sociologist's account of the Dalit in the village below.

> The first time I saw him, he was sitting on the dusty road in front of one of the small thatch-roofed tea shops in the village with his glass and saucer placed conspicuously beside him—a silent signal to the shopkeeper that an Untouchable wanted to buy some tea. Muli was a gaunt forty-year-old with betel-blackened teeth who wore his long hair swept back (Freeman 1978).

A quote from Amartya Sen perhaps illustrates well how inequality is central to differences among societies.

> Some Indians are rich; most are not. Some are very well educated; others are illiterate. Some lead easy lives of luxury; others toil hard for little reward. Some are politically powerful; others cannot influence anything. Some have great opportunities for advancement in life: others lack them altogether. Some are treated with respect by the police; others are treated like dirt. These are different kinds of inequality, and each of them requires serious attention (Sen 2005:210-11).

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Discuss the visuals
What kind of pluralities and inequalities do they show?

Activity 2

The recent National Family Health Survey of the Government of India suggests that access to sanitation facilities is more than 60 per cent. Find out about other indicators of social inequality, for instance education, health, employment etc.

IV

Introducing Sociology

You have already been acquainted with the sociological imagination and the central concern of sociology to study society as an interconnected whole. Our discussion on the individual's choices and the job market showed how the economic, political, familial, cultural, educational institutions are interconnected. And how the individual is both constrained by it and yet can change it to an extent. The next few chapters will elaborate on different institutions as well as on culture. It will also focus on some key terms and concepts in sociology that will enable you to understand society. For sociology is the study of human social life, groups and societies. Its subject matter is our own behaviour as social beings.

Sociology is not the first subject to do so. People have always observed and reflected upon societies and groups in which they live. This is evident in the writings of philosophers, religious teachers, and legislators of all civilisations and epochs. This human trait to think about our lives and about society is by no means confined to philosophers and social thinkers. All of us do have ideas about our own everyday life and also about others' lives, about our own 'society' and also about others' 'society'. These are our everyday notions, our common sense in terms of which we live our lives. However the observations and ideas that sociology as a discipline makes about 'society' is different from both that of philosophical reflections and common sense.

Observations of philosophical and religious thinkers are often about what is moral or immoral in human behaviour, about the desirable way of living and about a good society. Sociology too concerns itself with norms and values. But its focus is not on norms and values as they ought to be, as goals that people should pursue. Its concern is with the way they function in actual societies. (In Chapter 3, you will see how sociology of religion is different from a theological study). Empirical study of societies is an important part of what sociologists do. This however does not mean that sociology is not concerned with values. It only means that when a sociologist studies a society, the sociologist is willing to observe and collect findings, even if they are not to her/his personal liking.

Peter Berger makes an unusual but effective comparison to make the point.

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> In any political or military conflict it is of advantage to capture the information used by the intelligence organs of the opposing side. But this is so only because good intelligence consists of information free of bias. If a spy does his/her reporting in terms of the ideology and ambitions of his/her superiors, his/her reports are useless not only to the enemy, if the latter should capture them, but also to the spy's own side... The sociologist is a spy in very much the same way. His/her job is to report as accurately as he/she can about a certain terrain (Berger 1963:16-17).

Does this mean that the sociologist has no social responsibility to ask about the goals of his/her study or the work to which the sociological findings will be applied. He/she has such a responsibility, just like any other citizen of society. But this asking is not sociological asking. This is like the biologist whose biological knowledge can be employed to heal or kill. This does not mean the biologist is free of responsibility as to which use s/he serves. But this is not a biological question.

Sociology has from its beginnings understood itself as a science. Unlike commonsensical observations or philosophical reflections or theological commentaries, sociology is bound by scientific canons of procedure. It means that the statements that the sociologist arrives at must be arrived at through the observations of certain rules of evidence that allow others to check on or to repeat to develop his/her findings further. There has been considerable debate within sociology about the differences between natural science and human science, between quantitative and qualitative research. We need not enter this here. But what is relevant here is that sociology in its observation and analysis has to follow certain rules that can be checked upon by others. In the next section, we compare sociological knowledge to common sense knowledge which will once again emphasise the role of methods, procedures and rules in the manner in which sociology conducts its observation of society. Chapter 5 of this book will provide you with a sense of what sociologists do and how they go about studying society. An elaboration of the differences between sociology and common sense knowledge will help towards a clearer idea of the sociological approach and method.

V

Sociology and Common Sense Knowledge

We have seen how sociological knowledge is different from theological and philosophical observations. Likewise sociology is different from common sense observations. The common sense explanations are generally based on what may be called 'naturalistic' and/or individualistic explanation. A naturalistic explanation for behaviour rests on the assumption that one can really identify 'natural' reasons for behaviour.

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Activity 3

An example of poverty has been given below and we also touched upon it in our discussion on the homeless. Think of other issues and how they could be explained in a naturalistic and sociological way.

Sociology thus breaks away from both common sense observations and ideas as well as from philosophical thought. It does not always or even generally lead to spectacular results. But meaningful and unsuspected connections can be reached only by sifting through masses of connections. Great advances in sociological knowledge have been made, generally incrementally and only rarely by a dramatic breakthrough.

Sociology has a body of concepts, methods and data, no matter how loosely coordinated. This cannot be substituted by common sense. Common sense is unreflective since it does not question its own origins. Or in other words it does not ask itself: "Why do I hold this view?" The sociologist must be ready to ask of any of our beliefs, about ourselves — no matter how cherished — "is this really so?" Both the systematic and questioning approach of sociology is derived from a broader tradition of scientific investigation. This emphasis on

Explanation of	*Naturalistic*	*Sociological*
Poverty	People are poor because they are afraid of work, come from 'problem families', are unable to budget properly, suffer from low intelligence and shiftlessness.	Contemporary poverty is caused by the structure of inequality in class society and is experienced by those who suffer from chronic irregularity of work and low wages (Jayaram 1987:3).

Unsuspected Connections?

In many societies, including in many parts of India, the line of descent and inheritance passes from father to son. This is understood as a patrilineal system. Keeping in mind that women tend not to get property rights, the Government of India in the aftermath of the Kargil War decided that financial compensation for the death of Indian soldiers should go to their widows so that they were provided for.

The government had certainly not anticipated the unintended consequence of this decision. It led to many forced marriages of the widows with their brother-in-law (husband's brother or *dewar*). In some cases the brother-in-law (then husband) was a young child and the sister-in-law (then wife) a young woman. This was to ensure that the compensation remained with the deceased man's patrilineal family. Can you think of other such unintended consequences of a social action or a state measure?

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scientific procedures can be understood only if we go back in time and understand the context or social situation within which the sociological perspective emerged as sociology was greatly influenced by the great developments in modern science. Let us have a very brief look at what intellectual ideas went into the making of sociology.

VI

The Intellectual Ideas that Went into the Making of Sociology

Influenced by scientific theories of natural evolution and findings about pre-modern societies made by early travellers, colonial administrators, sociologists and social anthropologists sought to categorise societies into types and to distinguish stages in social development. These features reappear in the 19th century in works of early sociologists, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer. Efforts were therefore made to classify different types of societies on that basis, for instance:

- Types of pre-modern societies such as hunters and gatherers, pastoral and agrarian, agrarian and non-industrial civilisations.
- Types of modern societies such as the industrialised societies.

Such an evolutionary vision assumed that the west was necessarily the most advanced and civilised. Non- western societies were often seen as barbaric and less developed. The Indian colonial experience has to be seen in this light. Indian sociology reflects this tension which "go far back to the history of British colonialism and the intellectual and ideological response to it..." (Singh 2004:19). Perhaps because of this backdrop, Indian sociology has been particularly thoughtful and reflexive of its practice (Chaudhuri 2003). You will be engaging with Indian sociological thought, its concerns and practice in greater detail in the book, *Understanding Society*.

Darwin's ideas about organic evolution were a dominant influence on early sociological thought. Society was often compared with living organisms and efforts were made to trace its growth through stages comparable to those of organic life. This way of looking at society as a system of parts, each part playing a given function influenced the study of social institutions like the family or the school and structures such as stratification. We mention this here because the intellectual ideas that went into the making of sociology have a direct bearing on how sociology studies empirical reality.

The Enlightenment, an European intellectual movement of the late 17th and 18th centuries, emphasised reason and individualism. There was also great advancement of scientific knowledge and a growing conviction that the methods of the natural sciences should and could be extended to the study of human affairs. For example poverty, so

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far seen as a 'natural phenomenon', began to be seen as a 'social problem' caused by human ignorance or exploitation. Poverty therefore could be studied and redressed. One way of studying this was through the social survey that was based on the belief that human phenomena can be classified and measured. You will be discussing social survey in chapter 5.

Thinkers of the early modern era were convinced that progress in knowledge promised the solution to all social ills. For example, Auguste Comte, the French scholar (1789–1857), considered to be the founder of sociology, believed that sociology would contribute to the welfare of humanity.

VII

The Material Issues that Went into the Making of Sociology

The Industrial Revolution was based upon a new, dynamic form of economic activity — capitalism. This system of capitalism became the driving force behind the growth of industrial manufacturing. Capitalism involved new attitudes and institutions. Entrepreneurs now engaged in the sustained, systematic pursuit of profit. The markets acted as the key instrument of productive life. And goods, services and labour became commodities whose use was determined by rational calculation.

The new economy was completely different from what it replaced. England was the centre of the Industrial Revolution. In order to understand how far–reaching change industrialisation brought about was, we take a quick look at what life in pre-industrial England was like. Before industrialisation, agriculture and textiles were the chief occupations of the British. Most people lived in villages. Like in our own Indian villages, there were peasants and landlords, the blacksmith and leather worker, the weaver and the potter, the shepherd and the brewer. Society was small. It was hierarchical, i.e. the status and class positions of different people were clearly defined. Like all traditional societies it was also characterised by close interaction. With industrialisation each of these features changed.

One of the most fundamental aspects of the new order was the degradation of labour, the wrenching of work from the protective contexts of guild, village, and family. Both the radical and conservative thinkers were appalled at the decline of the status of the common labourer, not to mention the skilled craftsman.

Urban centres expanded and grew. It was not that there were no cities earlier. But their character prior to industrialisation was different. The industrial cities gave birth to a completely new kind of urban world. It was marked by the soot and grime of factories, by overcrowded slums of the new industrial working class, bad sanitation and general squalor. It was also marked by new kinds of social interactions.

The Hindi film song on the next page captures both the material as well

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From working class neighbourhoods to slum localitites

as the experiential aspects of city life. From the film *C.I.D.* 1956

Aye dil hai mushkil jeena yahan
Zara hat ke, zara bach ke, yeh hai Bombay meri jaan
Kahin building kahin traame, kahin motor kahin mill
Milta hai yahan sab kuchh ik milta nahin dil
Insaan ka nahin kahin naam-o-nishaan
Kahin satta, kahin patta kahin chori kahin res
Kahin daaka, kahin phaaka kahin thokar kahin thes
Bekaaro ke hain kai kaam yahan
Beghar ko aawara yahan kehte has has
Khud kaate gale sabke kahe isko business
Ik cheez ke hain kai naam yahan
Geeta Bura duniya woh hai kehta aisa bhola tu na ban
Jo hai karta woh hai bharta hai yahan ka yeh chalan

PARAPHRASE: Dear heart, life is hard here, you must watch where you're going if you want to save yourself, this is Bombay my dear! You'll find buildings, you'll find trams, you'll find motors, you'll find mills, you'll find everything here except a human heart, there's no trace of humanity here. So much of what is done here is meaningless, it's either power, or it's money, or it's theft, or it's cheating. The rich mock the homeless as vagabonds, but when they cut each other's throats themselves, it's called business! The same action is given various names in this place.

Activity 4

Note how quickly Britain, the seat of the Industrial Revolution became an urban from a predominantly rural society. Was this process identical in India?
1810: 20 per cent of the population lived in towns and cities.
1910: 80 per cent of the population lived in towns and cities.

Significantly the impact of the same process was different in India, Urban centres did grow. But with the entry of British manufactured goods, more people moved into agriculture.

> The mass of Indian handicraftsmen ruined as a result of the influx of manufactured machine-made goods of British industries were not absorbed in any extensively developed indigenous industries. The ruined mass of these handicraftsmen, in the main, took to agriculture for subsistence (Desai 1975:70).

The factory and its mechanical division of labour were often seen as a deliberate attempt to destroy the peasant, the artisan, as well as family and local community. The factory was perceived as an archetype of an economic regimentation hitherto known only in barracks and prisons. According to Karl Marx the factory was oppressive. Yet potentially liberating. Here workers learnt both collective

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functioning as well as concerted efforts for better conditions.

Another indicator of the emergence of modern societies was the new significance of clock-time as a basis of social organisation. A crucial aspect of this was the way in which, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the tempo of agricultural and manufacturing labour increasingly came to be set by the clock and calendar in a way very different from pre-modern forms of work. Prior to the development of industrial capitalism, work-rhythms were set by factors such as the period of daylight, the break between tasks and the constraints of deadlines or other social duties. Factory production implied the synchronisation of labour — it began punctually, had a steady pace and took place for set hours and on particular days of the week. In addition, the clock injected a new urgency to work. For both employer and employee 'time is now money: it is not passed but spent.'

Activity 5

Find out how work is organised in a traditional village, a factory and a call centre.

Activity 6

Find out how industrial capitalism changed Indian lives in villages and cities.

VIII

Why should we Study the Beginning and Growth of Sociology in Europe?

Most of the issues and concerns of sociology also date back to a time when European society was undergoing tumultuous changes in the 18th and 19th centuries with the advent of capitalism and industrialisation. Many of the issues that were raised then, for example, urbanisation or factory production, are pertinent to all modern societies, even though their specific features may vary. Indeed, Indian society with its colonial past and incredible diversity is distinct. The sociology of India reflects this.

If this is so, why focus on Europe of that time? Why is it relevant to start there? The answer is relatively simple. For our past, as Indians are closely linked to the history of British capitalism and colonialism. Capitalism in the west entailed a world-wide expansion. The passages in the box on next page represent but two strands in the manner that western capitalism impacted the world.

R.K. Laxman's travelogue of Mauritius brings home the presence of this colonial and global past.

> Here Africans and Chinese, Biharis and Dutch, Persians and Tamils, Arabs, French and English all rub merrily with one another... A Tamil, for instance, bears a deceptively south Indian face and a name to go with it to boot; Radha Krishna

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Capitalism and its global but uneven transformation of societies

Between the 17th and 19th centuries an estimated 24 million Africans were enslaved. 11 million of them survived the journey to the Americas in one of a number of great movements of population that feature in modern history. They were plucked from their existing homes and cultures, transported around the world in appalling conditions, and put to work in the service of capitalism. Enslavement is a graphic example of how people were caught up in the development of modernity against their will. The institution of slavery declined in the 1800s. But for us in India it was in the 1800s that indentured labour was taken in ships by the British for running their cotton and sugar plantations in distant lands such as Surinam in South America or in the West Indies or the Fiji Islands. V.S. Naipaul the great English writer who won the Nobel prize is a descendant of one of these thousands who were taken to lands they had never seen and who died without being able to return.

Govindan is indeed from Madras. I speak to him in Tamil. He surprises me by responding in a frightfully mangled English with a heavy French accent. Mr Govindan has no knowledge of Tamil and his tongue has ceased curling to produce Tamil sounds centuries ago (Laxman 2003) !

IX

The Growth of Sociology in India

Colonialism was an essential part of modern capitalism and industrialisation. The writings of Western sociologists on capitalism and other aspects of modern society are therefore relevant for understanding social change in India. Yet as we saw with reference to urbanisation, colonialism implied that the impact of industrialisation in India was not necessarily the same as in the west. Karl Marx's comments on the impact of the East India Company bring out the contrast.

> India, the great workshop of cotton manufacture for the world, since immemorial times, now became inundated with English twists and cotton stuffs. After its own produce had been excluded from England, or only admitted on the most cruel terms, British manufactures were poured into it at a small and merely nominal duty, to the ruin of the native cotton fabrics once so celebrated (Marx 1853 cited in Desai 1975).

Sociology in India also had to deal with western writings and ideas about Indian society that were not always correct. These ideas were expressed both in the accounts of colonial officials as well western scholars. For many of them Indian society was a contrast to western society. We take just one example here, the way the Indian village was understood and portrayed as unchanging.

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In keeping with contemporary-Victorian-evolutionary ideas, western writers saw in the Indian village a remnant or survival from what was called "the infancy of society". They saw in nineteenth-century India the past of the European society.

Yet another evidence of the colonial heritage of countries like India is the distinction often made between sociology and social anthropology. A standard western textbook definition of sociology is "the study of human groups and societies, giving particular emphasis to the analysis of the industrialised world" (Giddens 2001: 699). A standard western definition of social anthropology would be the study of simple societies of non-western and therefore "other" cultures. In India the story is quite different. M.N. Srinivas maps the trajectory:

> In a country such as India, with its size and diversity, regional, linguistic, religious, sectarian, ethnic (including caste), and between rural and urban areas, there are a myriad 'others'... In a culture and society such as India's, 'the other' can be encountered literally next door... (Srinivas 1966:205).

Furthermore social anthropology in India moved gradually from a pre-occupation with the study of 'primitive people' to the study of peasants, ethnic groups, social classes, aspects and features of ancient civilisations, and modern industrial societies. No rigid divide exists between sociology and social anthropology in India, a characteristic feature of the two subjects in many western countries. Perhaps the very diversity of the modern and traditional, of the village and the metropolitan in India accounts for this.

X

The Scope of Sociology and its Relationship to other Social Science Disciplines

The scope of sociological study is extremely wide. It can focus its analysis of meaningful interactions between individuals such as that of a shopkeeper with a customer, between teachers and students, between two friends or family members. It can likewise focus on national issues such as unemployment or caste conflict or the effect of state policies on forest rights of the tribal population or rural indebtedness. Or examine global social processes such as: the impact of new flexible labour regulations on the working class; or that of the electronic media on the young; or the entry of foreign universities on the education system of the country. What defines the discipline of sociology is therefore not just what it studies (i.e. family or trade unions or villages) but how it studies a chosen field.

Sociology is one of a group of social sciences, which also includes anthropology, economics, political science and history. The divisions among the various social sciences are not clearcut, and all share a certain range of common interests, concepts

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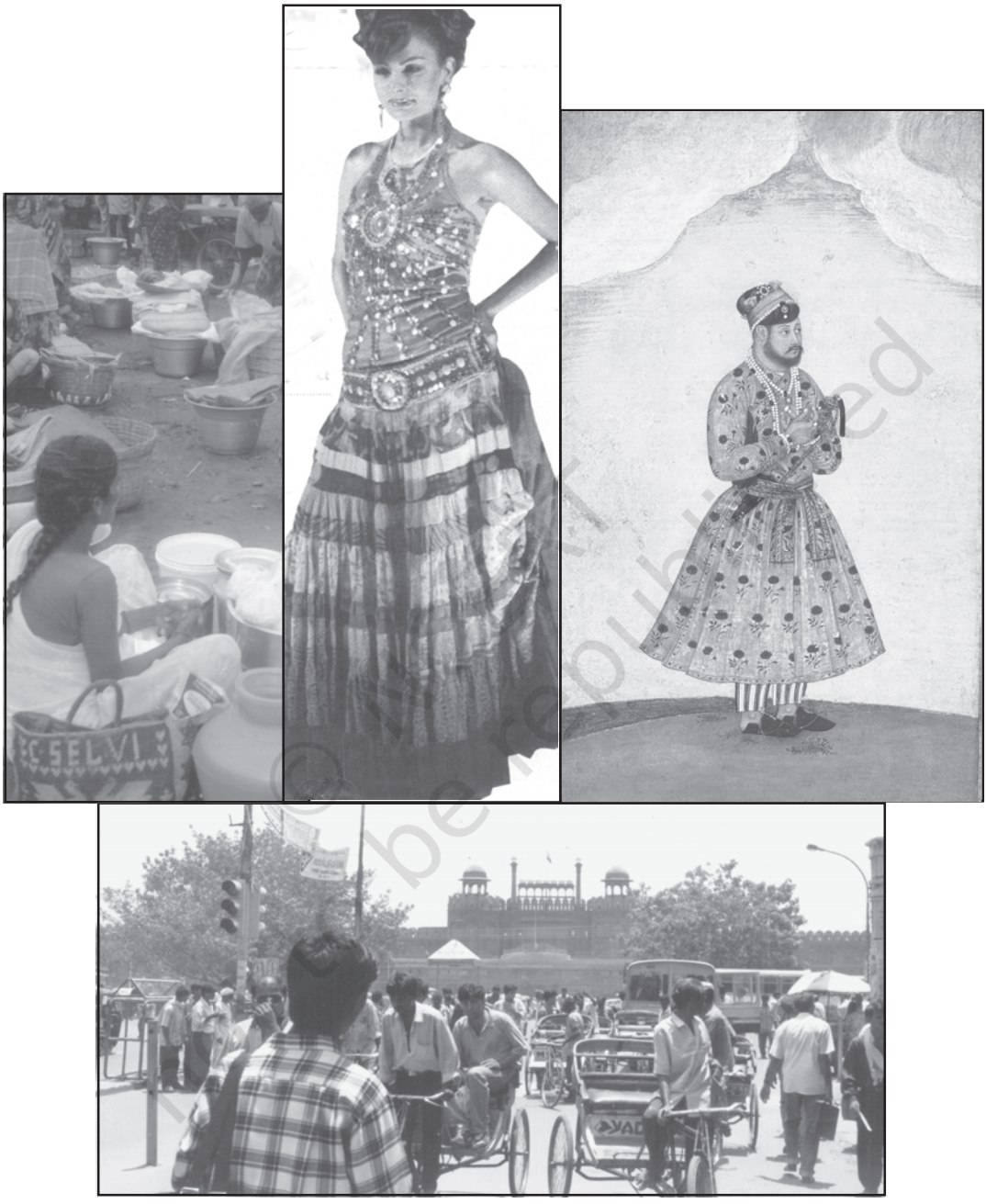

Discuss how you think history, sociology, political science, economics will study fashion/clothes, market places and city streets

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and methods. It is therefore very important to understand that the distinctions of the disciplines are to some extent arbitrary and should not be seen in a straitjacket fashion. To differentiate the social sciences would be to exaggerate the differences and gloss over the similarities. Furthermore feminist theories have also shown the greater need of interdisciplinary approach. For instance how would a political scientist or economist study gender roles and their implications for politics or the economy without a sociology of the family or gender division of labour.

Activity 7

- Do you think advertisements actually influence people's consumption patterns?
- Do you think the idea of what defines 'good life' is only economically defined?
- Do you think 'spending' and 'saving' habits are culturally formed?

Sociology and Economics

Economics is the study of production and distribution of goods and services. The classical economic approach dealt almost exclusively with the inter-relations of pure economic variables: the relations of price, demand and supply; money flows; output and input ratios, and the like. The focus of traditional economics has been on a narrow understanding of 'economic activity', namely the allocation of scarce goods and services within a society. Economists who are influenced by a political economy approach seek to understand economic activity in a broader framework of ownership of and relationship to means of production. The objective of the dominant trend in economic analysis was however to formulate precise laws of economic behaviour.

The sociological approach looks at economic behaviour in a broader context of social norms, values, practices and interests. The corporate sector managers are aware of this. The large investment in the advertisement industry is directly linked to the need to reshape lifestyles and consumption patterns. Trends within economics such as feminist economics seek to broaden the focus, drawing in gender as a central organising principle of society. For instance they would look at how work in the home is linked to productivity outside.

The defined scope of economics has helped in facilitating its development as a highly focused, coherent discipline. Sociologists often envy the economists for the precision of their terminology and the exactness of their measures. And the ability to translate the results of their theoretical work into practical suggestions having major implications for public policy. Yet economists' predictive abilities often suffer precisely because of their neglect of individual behaviour, cultural norms and institutional resistance which sociologists study.

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Pierre Bourdieu wrote in 1998.

> A true economic science would look at all the costs of the economy-not only at the costs that corporations are concerned with, but also at crimes, suicides, and so on.
>
> We need to put forward an economics of happiness, which would take note of all the profits, individual and collective, material and symbolic, associated with activity (such as security), and also the material and symbolic costs associated with inactivity or precarious employment (for example consumption of medicines: France holds the world record for the use of tranquilisers), (cited in Swedberg 2003).

Sociology unlike economics usually does not provide technical solutions. But it encourages a questioning and critical perspective. This helps questioning of basic assumptions. And thereby facilitates a discussion of not just the technical means towards a given goal, but also about the social desirability of a goal itself. Recent trends have seen a resurgence of economic sociology perhaps because of both this wider and critical perspective of sociology.

Sociology provides clearer or more adequate understanding of a social situation than existed before. This can be either on the level of factual knowledge, or through gaining an improved grasp of why something is happening (in other words, by means of theoretical understanding).

Sociology and Political Science

As in the case of economics, there is an increased interaction of methods and approaches between sociology and political science. Conventional political science was focused primarily on two elements: political theory and government administration. Neither branch involves extensive contact with political behaviour. The theory part usually focuses on the ideas about government from Plato to Marx while courses on administration generally deal with the formal structure of government rather than its actual operation.

Sociology is devoted to the study of all aspects of society, whereas conventional political science restricted itself mainly to the study of power as embodied in formal organisation. Sociology stresses the interrelationships between sets of institutions including government, whereas political science tends to turn attention towards the processes within the government.

However, sociology long shared similar interests of research with

Activity 8

Find out the kind of studies that were conducted during the last general elections. You will probably find both features of political science and sociology in them. Discuss how disciplines interact and mutually influence each other.

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political science. Sociologists like Max Weber worked in what can be termed as political sociology. The focus of political sociology has been increasingly on the actual study of political behaviour. Even in the recent Indian elections one has seen the extensive study of political patterns of voting. Studies have also been conducted in membership of political organisations, process of decision-making in organisations, sociological reasons for support of political parties, the role of gender in politics, etc.

Sociology and History

Historians almost as a rule study the past, sociologists are more interested in the contemporary or recent past. Historians earlier were content to delineate the actual events, to establish how things actually happened, while in sociology the focus was to seek to establish causal relationships.

History studies concrete details while the sociologist is more likely to abstract from concrete reality, categorise and generalise. Historians today are equally involved in doing sociological methods and concepts in their analysis.

Conventional history has been about the history of kings and war. The history of less glamorous or exciting events as changes in land relations or gender relations within the family have traditionally been less studied by historians but formed the core area of the sociologist's interest. Today, however history is far more sociological and social history is the stuff of history. It looks at social patterns, gender relations, mores, customs and important institutions other than the acts of rulers, wars and monarchy.

Activity 9

Find out how historians have written about the history of art, of cricket, of clothes and fashion, of architecture and housing styles.

Sociology and Psychology

Psychology is often defined as the science of behaviour. It involves itself primarily with the individual. It is interested in her/his intelligence and learning, motivations and memory, nervous system and reaction time, hopes and fears. Social psychology, which serves as a bridge between psychology and sociology, maintains a primary interest in the individual but concerns itself with the way in which the individual behaves in social groups, collectively with other individuals.

Sociology attempts to understand behaviour as it is organised in society, that is the way in which personality is shaped by different aspects of society. For instance, economic and political system, their family and kinship structure, their culture, norms and values. It is interesting to recall that Durkheim who sought to establish a clear scope and method for sociology in his well-known study of suicide left out individual intentions of those who commit or try to commit suicide in favour of statistics concerning various

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social characteristics of these individuals.

Sociology and Social Anthropology

Anthropology in most countries incorporates archaeology, physical anthropology, cultural history, many branches of linguistics and the study of all aspects of life in "simple societies". Our concern here is with social anthropology and cultural anthropology for it is that which is close to the study of sociology. Sociology is deemed to be the study of modern, complex societies while social anthropology was deemed to be the study of simple societies.

As we saw earlier, each discipline has its own history or biography. Social anthropology developed in the west at a time when it meant that western-trained social anthropologists studied non-European societies often thought of as exotic, barbaric and uncivilised. This unequal relationship between those who studied and those who were studied as not remarked upon too often earlier. But times have changed and we have the erstwhile 'natives' be they Indians or Sudanese, Nagas or Santhals, who now speak and write about their own societies. The anthropologists of the past documented the details of simple societies apparently in a neutral scientific fashion. In practice they were constantly comparing those societies with the model of the western modern societies as a benchmark.

Other changes have also redefined the nature of sociology and social anthropology. Modernity as we saw led to a process whereby the smallest village was impacted by global processes. The most obvious example is colonialism. The most remote village of India under British colonialism saw its land laws and administration change, its revenue extraction alter, its manufacturing industries collapse.

Tea pickers in Assam

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Activity 10

- Find out where in India did ancestors of the community of Santhal workers who have been working in the tea plantations in Assam come from.
- When was tea cultivation started in Assam?
- Did the British drink tea before colonialism?

Contemporary global processes have further accentuated this 'shrinking of the globe'. The assumption of studying a simple society was that it was bounded. We know this is not so today.

The traditional study of simple, non-literate societies by social anthropology had a pervasive influence on the content and the subject matter of the discipline. Social anthropology tended to study society (simple societies) in all their aspects, as wholes. In so far as they specialised, it was on the basis of area as for example the Andaman Islands, the Nuers or Melanesia. Sociologists study complex societies and would therefore often focus on parts of society like the bureaucracy or religion or caste or a process such as social mobility.

Social anthropology was characterised by long field work tradition, living in the community studied and using ethnographic research methods. Sociologists have often relied on survey method and quantitative data using statistics and the questionnaire mode. Chapter 5 will give you a more comprehensive account of these two traditions.

Today the distinction between a simple society and a complex one itself needs major rethinking. India itself is a complex mix of tradition and modernity, of the village and the city, of caste and tribe, of class and community. Villages nestle right in the heart of the capital city of Delhi. Call centres serve European and American clients from different towns of the country.

Indian sociology has been far more eclectic in borrowing from both traditions. Indian sociologists often studied Indian societies that were both part of and not of one's own culture. It could also be dealing with both complex differentiated societies of urban modern India as well as the study of tribes in a holistic fashion.

It had been feared that with the decline of simple societies, social anthropology would lose its specificity and merge with sociology. However there have been fruitful interchanges between the two disciplines and today often methods and techniques are drawn from both. There have been anthropological studies of the state and globalisation, which are very different from the traditional subject matter of social anthropology. On the other hand, sociology too has been using quantitative and qualitative techniques, macro and micro approaches for studying the complexities of modern societies. As mentioned before we will in a sense carry on this discussion in Chapter 5 . For in India, sociology and social anthropology have had a very close relationship.

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Glossary

Capitalism : A system of economic enterprise based on market exchange. "Capital" refers to any asset, including money, property and machines, which can be used to produce commodities for sale or invested in a market with the hope of achieving a profit. This system rests on the private ownership of assets and the means of production.

Dialectic : The existence or action of opposing social forces, for instance, social constraint and individual will.

Empirical Investigation : A factual enquiry carried out in any given area of sociological study.

Feminist Theories : A sociological perspective which emphasises the centrality of gender in analysing the social world. There are many strands of feminist theory, but they all share in common the desire to explain gender inequalities in society and to work to overcome them.

Social Constraint : A term referring to the fact that the groups and societies of which we are a part exert a conditioning influence on our behaviour.

Values : Ideas held by human individual or groups about what is desirable, proper, good or bad. Differing values represent key aspects of variations in human culture.

Exercises

1. Why is the study of the origin and growth of sociology important?
2. Discuss the different aspects of the term 'society'. How is it different from your common sense understanding?
3. Discuss how there is greater give and take among disciplines today.
4. Identify any personal problem that you or your friends or relatives are facing. Attempt a sociological understanding.

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Chapter 2

Terms, Concepts and their Use in Sociology

I

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced us to an idea both about society as well as sociology. We saw that a central task of sociology is to explore the interplay of society and the individual. We also saw that individuals do not float freely in society but are part of collective bodies like the family, tribe, caste, class, clan, nation. In this chapter, we move further to understand the kinds of groups individuals form, the kinds of unequal orders, stratification systems within which, individuals and groups are placed, the way social control operates, the roles that individuals have and play, and the status they occupy.

In other words we start exploring how society itself functions. Is it harmonious or conflict ridden? Are status and roles fixed? How is social control exercised? What kinds of inequalities exist? The question however remains as to why do we need specific terms and concepts to understand this. Why does sociology need to have a special set of terms when we use terms like status and roles or social control anyway in our everyday life?

For a discipline such as, say, nuclear physics that deals with matters unknown to most people and for which no word exists in common speech, it seems obvious that a discipline must develop a terminology. However, terminology is possibly even more important for sociology, just because its subject matter is familiar and just because words do exist to denote it. We are so well acquainted with the social institutions that surround us that we cannot see them clearly and precisely (Berger 1976:25).

For example we may feel that since we live in families we know all about families. This would be conflating or equating sociological knowledge with common sense knowledge or naturalistic explanation, which we have discussed in Chapter 1.

We also found in the previous chapter how sociology as a discipline

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has a biography or history. We saw how certain material and intellectual developments shaped the sociological perspective as well as its concerns. Likewise sociological concepts too have a story to tell. Many of the concepts reflect the concern of social thinkers to understand and map the social changes that the shift from pre-modern to modern entailed. For instance sociologists observed that simple, small scale and traditional societies were more marked by close, often face-to-face interaction. And modern, large scale societies by formal interaction. They therefore distinguished primary from secondary groups, community from society or association. Other concepts like stratification reflect the concern that sociologists had in understanding the structured inequalities between groups in society.

Concepts arise in society. However just as there are different kinds of individuals and groups in society so there are different kinds of concepts and ideas. And sociology itself is marked by different ways of understanding society and looking at dramatic social changes that the modern period brought about.

We have seen how even in the early stage of sociology's emergence there were contrary and contesting understandings of society. If for Karl Marx class and conflict were key concepts to understand society, social solidarity and collective conscience were key terms for Emile Durkheim. In the Post-World War II period sociology was greatly influenced by the structural functionalists who found society essentially harmonious. They found it useful to compare society to an organism where different parts have a function to play for the maintenance of the whole. Others, in particular the conflict theorists influenced by Marxism saw society as essentially conflict ridden.

Within sociology some tried to understand human behaviour by starting with the individual, i.e. micro interaction. Others began with macro structures such as class, caste, market, state or even community. Concepts such as status and role begin with the individual. Concepts such as social control or stratification begin from a larger context within which individuals are already placed.

The important point is that these classifications and types that we discuss in sociology help us as the tools through which we can understand reality. They are keys to open locks to understand society. They are entry points in our understanding, not the final answer. But what if the key becomes rusted or bent or does not fit the lock, or fits in with effort? In such situations we need to change or modify the key. In sociology we both use and also constantly interrogate or question the concepts and categories.

Very often there is considerable unease about the coexistence of different kinds of definitions or concepts or even just different views about the same social entity. For example conflict theory versus the functionalist theory. This multiplicity of approaches is particularly acute in sociology. And it

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cannot but be otherwise for society itself is diverse.

Activity 1

Choose any one of the following topics for class discussion :

- democracy is a help or hindrance to development
- gender equality makes for a more harmonious or more divisive society
- punishments or greater discussion are the best way to resolve conflicts.

Think of other topics.

What kind of differences emerged? Do they reflect different visions of what a good society ought to be like? Do they reflect different notions of the human being?

In our discussion on the various terms you will notice how there exists divergence of views. And how this very debate and discussion of differences helps us understand society.

II

Social Groups and Society

Sociology is the study of human social life. A defining feature of human life is that humans interact, communicate and construct social collectivities. The comparative and historical perspective of sociology brings home two apparently innocuous facts. The first that in every society whether ancient or feudal or modern, Asian or European or African human groups and collectivities exist. The second that the types of groups and collectivities are different in different societies.

Any gathering of people does not necessarily constitute a social group. Aggregates are simply collections of people who are in the same place at the same time, but share no definite connection with one another. Passengers waiting at a railway station or airport or bus stop or a cinema audience are examples of aggregates. Such aggregates are often termed as quasi groups.

What kind of groups are these?

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A quasi group is an aggregate or combination, which lacks structure or organisation, and whose members may be unaware, or less aware, of the existence of groupings. Social classes, status groups, age and gender groups, crowds can be seen as examples of quasi groups. As these examples suggest quasi groups may well become social groups in time and in specific circumstances. For example, individuals belonging to a particular social class or caste or community may not be organised as a collective body. They may be yet to be infused with a sense of "we" feeling. But class and caste have over a period of time given rise to political parties. Likewise people of different communities in India have over the long anti-colonial struggle developed an identity as a collectivity and group — a nation with a shared past and a common future. The women's movement brought about the idea of women's groups and organisation. All these examples draw attention to how social groups emerge, change and get modified.

A social group can be said to have at least the following characteristics :

(i) persistent interaction to provide continuity;
(ii) a stable pattern of these interactions;
(iii) a sense of belonging to identify with other members, i.e. each individual is conscious of the group itself and its own set of rules, rituals and symbols;
(iv) shared interest;
(v) acceptance of common norms and values; and
(vi) a definable structure.

Social structure here refers to patterns of regular and repetitive interaction between individuals or groups. A social group thus refers to a collection of continuously interacting persons who share common interest, culture, values and norms within a given society.

Activity 2

Find out a name that is relevant under each heading.

Caste	An anti – caste movement	A caste based political party
Class	A class based movement	A class based political party
Women	A women's movement	A women's organisation
Tribe	A tribal movement	A tribe/tribes based political party
Villagers	An environmental movement	An environmental organisation

Discuss whether they were all social groups to start with and if some were not, then at what point can one apply the term 'social group' to them, using the term as sociologically understood.

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Activity 3

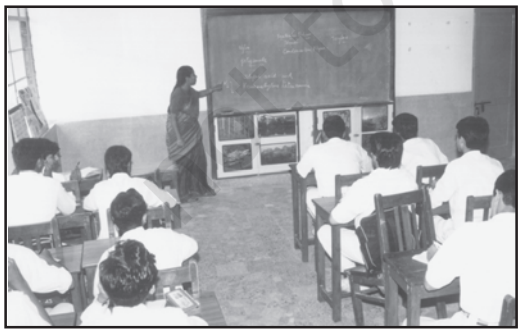
Discuss the age group of teenagers. Is it a quasi group or social group? Were ideas about 'teenage' and 'teenagers' as a special phase in life always there? In traditional societies how was the entry of children into adulthood marked? In contemporary times do marketing strategies and advertisement have anything to do with the strengthening or weakening of this group/quasi group? Identify an advertisement that targets teenagers or pre-teens. Read the section on stratification and discuss how teenage may mean very different life experiences for the poor and rich, for the upper and lower class, for the discriminated and privileged caste.

Types of Groups

As you read through this section on groups you will find that different sociologists and social anthropologists have categorised groups into different types. What you will be struck with however is that there is a pattern in the typology. In most cases they contrast the manner in which people form groups in traditional and small scale societies to that of modern and large scale societies. As mentioned earlier, they were struck by the difference between close, intimate, face-to-face interaction in traditional societies and impersonal, detached, distant interaction in modern societies. However a complete contrast is probably not an accurate description of reality.

Primary and Secondary Social Groups

The groups to which we belong are not all of equal importance to us. Some groups tend to influence many aspects of our lives and bring us into personal association with others. The term primary group is used to refer to a small group of people connected by intimate and face-to-face association and co-operation. The members of primary groups have a sense of belonging. Family, village and groups



Contrast the two types of groups.

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of friends are examples of primary groups.

Secondary groups are relatively large in size, maintain formal and impersonal relationships. The primary groups are person-oriented, whereas the secondary groups are goal oriented. Schools, government offices, hospitals, students' associations etc. are examples of secondary groups.

Community and Society or Association

The idea of comparing and contrasting the old traditional and agrarian way of life with the new modern and urban one in terms of their different and contrasting social relationships and lifestyles, dates back to the writings of classical sociologists.

The term 'community' refers to human relationships that are highly personal, intimate and enduring, those where a person's involvement is considerable if not total, as in the family, with real friends or a close-knit group.

'Society' or 'association' refers to everything opposite of 'community', in particular the apparently impersonal, superficial and transitory relationships of modern urban life. Commerce and industry require a more calculating, rational and self-interesting approach to one's dealings with others. We make contracts or agreements rather than getting to know one another. You may draw a parallel between the community with the primary group and the association with the secondary group.

Activity 4

Collect a copy of a memorandum of any association that you know of or can find out about for example a Residents Welfare Association, a women's association (Mahila Samiti), a Sports Club. You will find clear information about its goals, objectives, membership and other rules that govern it. Contrast this with a large family gathering.

You may find that many a time that interaction among members of a formal group over time becomes closes and 'just like family and friends.' This brings home the point that concepts are not fixed and frozen entities. They are indeed keys or tools for understanding society and its changes.

In-Groups and Out-Groups

A sense of belonging marks an in-group. This feeling separates 'us' or 'we' from 'them' or 'they'. Children belonging to a particular school may form an 'in-group' as against those who do not belong to the school. Can you think of other such groups?

An out-group on the other hand is one to which the members of an in-group do not belong. The members of an out-group can face hostile reactions from the members of the in-group. Migrants are often considered as an out-group. However, even here the

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actual definition of who belongs and who does not, changes with time and social contexts.

The well known sociologist M.N. Srinivas observed while he was carrying out a census in Rampura in 1948 how distinctions were made between recent and later migrants. He writes:

> I heard villagers use two expressions which I came to realise were significant: the recent immigrants were almost contemptuously described as *nenne monne bandavartu* ('came yesterday or the day before') while old immigrants were described as *arsheyinda bandavaru* ('came long ago') or *khadeem kulagalu* ('old lineages'), (Srinivas 1996:33).

Activity 5

Find out about the experience of immigrants in other countries. Or may be even from different parts of our own country.

You will find that relationships between groups change and modify. People once considered members of an out-group become in-group members. Can you find out about such processes in history?

Reference Group

For any group of people there are always other groups whom they look up to and aspire to be like. The groups whose lifestyles are emulated are known as reference groups. We do not belong to our reference groups but we do identify ourselves with that group. Reference groups are important sources of information about culture, lifestyle, aspiration and goal attainments.

In the colonial period many middle class Indians aspired to behave like proper Englishman. In that sense they could be seen as a reference group for the aspiring section. But this process was gendered, i.e. it had different implications for men and women. Often Indian men wanted to dress and dine like the British men but wanted the Indian women to remain 'Indian' in their ways. Or aspire to be a bit like the proper English woman but also not quite like her. Do you still find this valid today?

Peer Groups

This is a kind of primary group, usually formed between individuals who are either of similar age or who are in a common professional group. Peer pressure refers to the social pressure exerted by one's peers on what one ought to do or not.

Activity 6

Do your friends or others of your age group influence you? Are you concerned with their approval or disapproval about the way you dress, behave, the kind of music you like to listen to or the kind of films you prefer? Do you consider it to be social pressure? Discuss.

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Social Stratification

Social stratification refers to the existence of structured inequalities between groups in society, in terms of their access to material or symbolic rewards. Thus stratification can most simply be defined as structural inequalities between different groupings of people. Often social stratification is compared to the geological layering of rock in the earth's surface. Society can be seen as consisting of 'strata' in a hierarchy, with the more favoured at the top and the less privileged near the bottom.

Inequality of power and advantage is central for sociology, because of the crucial place of stratification in the organisation of society. Every aspect of the life of every individual and household is affected by stratification. Opportunities for health, longevity, security, educational success, fulfillment in work and political influence are all unequally distributed in systematic ways.

Historically four basic systems of stratification have existed in human societies: slavery, caste, estate and class. Slavery is an extreme form of inequality in which some individuals are literally owned by others. It has existed sporadically at many times and places, but there are two major examples of a system of slavery; ancient Greece and Rome and the Southern States of the USA in the 18th and 19th centuries. As a formal institution, slavery has gradually been eradicated. But we do continue to have bonded labour, often even of children. Estates characterised feudal Europe. We do not enter into details about estates here but very briefly touch upon caste and class as systems of social stratification. We shall be dealing in greater detail with class, caste, gender as bases of social stratification in the book, *Understanding Society* .

Caste

In a caste stratification system an individual's position totally depends on the status attributes ascribed by birth rather than on any which are achieved during the course of one's life. This is not to say that in a class society there is no systematic constraint on achievement imposed by status attributes such as race and gender. However, status attributes ascribed by birth in a caste society define an individual's position more completely than they do in class society.

In traditional India different castes formed a hierarchy of social precedence. Each position in the caste structure was defined in terms of its purity or pollution relative to others. The underlying belief was that those who are most pure, the *Brahmin* priestly castes, are superior to all others and the *Panchamas*, sometimes called the 'outcastes' are inferior to all other castes. The traditional system is generally conceptualised in terms of the four fold varna of *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. In reality there are innumerable occupation-based caste groups, called *jatis*.

The caste system in India has undergone considerable changes over the years. Endogamy and ritual

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avoidance of contact with members of so-called lower castes were considered critical for maintaining purity by the so-called upper castes. Changes brought in by urbanisation inevitably challenged this. Read well known sociologist A.R. Desai's observations below.

Other social consequences of urbanisation in India are commented upon by sociologist A.R. Desai as:

> Modern industries brought into being modern cities honey-combed with cosmopolitan hotels, restaurants, theatres, trams, buses, railways. The modest hotels and restaurants catered for the workers and middle classes became crowded in cities with persons belonging to all castes and even creeds... In trains and buses one occasionally rubbed shoulders with members of the depressed classes... should not, however be supposed that caste had vanished (Desai 1975:248).

While change did take place, discrimination was not so easy to do away with, as a first person narrative suggests.

In the mill there may be no open discrimination of the kind that exists in the villages, but experience of private interactions tells another story. Parmar observed...

> They will not even drink water from our hands and they sometimes use abusive language when dealing with us. This is because they feel and believe they are superior. It has been like that for years. No matter how well we dress they are not prepared to accept certain things (Franco et. al. 2004:150).

Even today acute caste discrimination exists. At the same time the working of democracy has affected the caste system. Castes as interest groups have gained strength. We have also seen discriminated castes asserting their democratic rights in society.

Class

There have been many attempts to explain class. We mention here, very briefly just the central ideas of Marx, Weber and that of, functionalism. In the Marxist theory social classes are defined by what relation they have to the means of production. Questions could be asked as to whether groups are owners of means of production such as land or factories? Or whether they are owners of nothing but their own labour? Weber used the term life-chances, which refers to the rewards and advantages afforded by market capacity. Inequality, Weber argued might be based on economic relations. But it could also be based on prestige or on political power.

The functionalist theory of social stratification begins from the general presupposition or belief of functionalism that no society is "classless" or unstratified. The main functional necessity explains the universal presence of social stratification in

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requirements faced by a society of placing and motivating individuals in the social structure. Social inequality or stratification is thus an unconsciously evolved device by which societies ensure that the most important positions are deliberately filled by the most qualified persons. Is this true?

In a traditional caste system social hierarchy is fixed, rigid and transmitted across generations. Modern class system in contrast is open and achievement-based. In democratic societies there is nothing to legally stop a person from the most deprived class and caste from reaching the highest position.

Activity 7

Find out more about the life of the late President K. R. Narayanan. Discuss the concept of ascription and achieved status, caste and class in this context.

Such stories of achievement do exist and are sources of immense inspiration. Yet for the most part the structure of the class system persists. Sociological studies of social mobility, even in western societies are far removed from the ideal model of perfect mobility. Sociology has to be sensitive to both the challenges to the caste system as well as the persistence of discrimination. Significantly those, at the lower levels of the system, are not just disadvantaged socially but also economically.

Status and Role

The two concepts 'status' and 'role' are often seen as twin concepts. A status is simply a position in society or in a group. Every society and every group has many such positions and every individual occupies many such positions.

Status thus refers to the social position with defined rights and duties assigned to these positions. To illustrate, mother occupies a status, which has many norms of conduct as well as certain responsibilities and prerogatives.

A role is the dynamic or the behavioural aspect of status. Status is occupied, but roles are played. We may say that a status is an institutionalised role. It is a role that has become regularised, standardised and formalised in the society at large or in any of the specific associations of society.

It must be apparent that each individual in a modern complex society such as ours occupies many different kinds of status during the course of his/her life. You as a school student may be a student to your teacher, a customer to your grocer, a passenger to the bus driver, a brother or sister to your sibling and a patient to the doctor. Needless to say, we could keep adding to the list. The smaller and simpler the

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society, the fewer the kinds of status that an individual can have.

In a modern society an individual as we saw occupies multiple status which is sociologically termed as status set. Individuals acquire different status at various stages of life. A son becomes a father, a grandfather, and then great grandfather and so on. This is called a status sequence for it refers to the status, which is attained in succession or sequence at various stages of life.

An ascribed status is a social position, which a person occupies because of birth, or assumes involuntarily. The most common bases for ascribed status are age, caste, race and kinship. Simple and traditional societies are marked by ascribed status. An achieved status on the other hand refers to a social position that a person occupies voluntarily by personal ability, achievements, virtues and choices. The most common bases for achieved status are educational qualifications, income, and professional expertise. Modern societies are characterised by achievements. Its members are accorded prestige on the basis of their achievements. How often you would have heard the phrase "you have to prove yourself". In traditional societies your status was defined and ascribed at birth. However, as discussed above, even in modern achievement-based societies, ascribed status matters.

Status and prestige are interconnected terms. Every status is accorded certain rights and values. Values are attached to the social position, rather than to the person who occupies it or to his/her performance or to his/her actions. The kind of value attached to the status or to the office is called prestige. People can rank status in terms of their high or low prestige. The prestige of a doctor may be high in comparison to a shopkeeper, even if the doctor may earn less. It is important to keep in mind that ideas of what occupation is considered prestigious varies across societies and across periods.

Activity 8

What kinds of jobs are considered prestigious in your society? Compare these with your friends. Discuss the similarities and differences. Try and understand the causes for the same.

People perform their roles according to social expectations, i.e. role taking and role playing. A child learns to behave in accordance with how her behaviour will be seen and judged by others.

Role conflict is the incompatibility among roles corresponding to one or more status. It occurs when contrary expectations arise from two or more roles. A common example is that of the

Activity 9

Find out how a domestic worker or a construction labourer faces role conflict.

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middle class working woman who has to juggle her role as mother and wife at home and that of a professional at work.

It is a common place assumption that men do not face role conflict. Sociology being both an empirical and comparative discipline suggests otherwise.

> Khasi matriliny generates intense role conflict for men. They are torn between their responsibilities to their natal house on the one hand and to their wife and children on the other. They feel deprived of sufficient authority to command their children's loyalty and lack the freedom to pass on after death, even their self-acquired property to their children...
>
> The strain affects Khasi women, in a way more intensely. A woman can never be fully assured that her husband does not find his sister's house more congenial place than her own house (Nongbri 2003:190).

Role stereotyping is a process of reinforcing some specific role for some member of the society. For example men and women are often socialised in stereotypical roles, as breadwinner and homemaker respectively. Social roles and status are often wrongly seen as fixed and unchanging. It is felt that individuals learn the expectations that surround social positions in their particular culture and perform these roles largely as they have been defined. Through socialisation, individuals internalise social roles and learn how to carry them out. This view, however, is mistaken. It suggests that individuals simply take on roles, rather than creating or negotiating them. In fact, socialisation is a process in which humans can exercise agency; they are not simply passive subjects waiting to be instructed or programmed. Individuals come to understand and assume social roles through an ongoing process of social interaction. This discussion perhaps will make you reflect upon the relationship between the individual and society, which we had studied in Chapter 1.

Roles and status are not given and fixed. People make efforts to fight against discrimination roles and status for example those based on caste, race or gender. At the same time there are sections in society who oppose such changes. Likewise individual violation of roles are often punished. Society thus functions not just with roles and status but also with social control.

Activity 10

Collect newspaper reports where dominant sections of society seek to impose control and punish those whom they consider to have transgressed or violated socially prescribed roles.

Society and Social Control

Social control is one of the most generally used concepts in sociology. It refers to the various means used by a society to bring its recalcitrant or unruly members back into line.

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You will recall how sociology has different perspectives and debates about the meaning of concepts. You will also recall how functionalist sociologists understood society as essentially harmonious and conflict theorists saw society as essentially unequal, unjust and exploitative. We also saw how some sociologists focussed more on the individual and society, others on collectivities like classes, races and castes.

For a functionalist perspective social control refers to: (i) the use of force to regulate the behaviour of the individual and groups and also refers to the (ii) enforcing of values and patterns for maintaining order in society. Social control here is directed to restrain deviant behaviour of individuals or groups on the one hand, and on the other, to mitigate tensions and conflicts among individuals and groups to maintain social order and social cohesion. In this way social control is seen as necessary to stability in society.

Conflict theorists usually would see social control more as a mechanism to impose the social control of dominant social classes on the rest of society. Stability would be seen as the writ of one section over the other. Likewise, law would be seen as the formal writ of the powerful and their interests on society.

Social control refers to the social process, techniques and strategies by which behaviours of individual or a group are regulated. It refers both to the use of force to regulate the behaviour of the individual and groups

> The ultimate and, no doubt, the oldest means of social control is physical violence... even in the politely operated societies of modern democracies the ultimate argument is violence. No state can exist without a police force or its equivalent in armed might... In any functioning society violence is used economically and as a last resort, with the mere threat of this ultimate violence sufficing for the day-to-day exercise of social control... Where human beings live or work in compact groups, in which they are personally known and to which they are tied by feelings of personal loyalty (the kind that sociologists call primary groups), very potent and simultaneously very subtle mechanisms of control are constantly brought to bear upon the actual or potent deviant... One aspect of social control that ought to be stressed is the fact that it is frequently based on fraudulent claims... A little boy can exercise considerable control over his peer group by having a big brother who, if need be, can be called upon to beat up any opponents. In the absence of such a brother, however it is possible to invent one. It will then be a question of the public-relations talents of the little boy as to whether he will succeed in translating his invention into actual control (Berger 84-90).
>
> Have you ever seen or heard a young child threaten another with " I will tell my elder brother."
>
> Can you think of other examples?

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and also refers to the enforcing of values and patterns for maintaining order in society.

Social control may be informal or formal. When the codified, systematic, and other formal mechanism of control is used, it is known as formal social control. There are agencies and mechanism of formal social control, for example, law and the state. In a modern society formal mechanisms and agencies of social control are emphasised.

In every society there is another type of social control that is known as informal social control. It is personal, unofficial and uncodified. They include smiles, making faces, body language, frowns, criticism, ridicule, laughter etc. There can be great variations in their use within the same society. In day-to-day life they are quite effective.

However, in some cases informal methods of social control may not be adequate in enforcing conformity or obedience. There are various agencies of informal social control e.g. family, religion, kinship, etc. Have you heard about honour killing? Read the newspaper report which is given below and identify the different agencies of social control involved.

Activity 11

Can you think of examples drawn from your life how this 'unofficial' social control operates? Have you in class or in your peer group noticed how a child who behaves a bit differently from the rest is treated? Have you witnessed incidents where children are bullied by their peer group to be more like the other children?

A sanction is a mode of reward or punishment that reinforces socially expected forms of behaviour. Social control can be positive or negative. Members of societies can be rewarded for good and expected behaviour. On the other hand, negative sanctions are also used to enforce rules and to restrain deviance.

Deviance refers to modes of action, which do not conform to the norms or

Man kills sister for marrying from outside the caste

... The elder brother of a 19-year-old girl here carried out an apparent 'honour killing' by allegedly beheading her while she was asleep at a hospital ... police said on Monday.

The girl... was undergoing treatment at ... Hospital for stab wounds after her brother... attacked her on December 16 for marrying outside the caste, they said. She and her lover eloped on December 10 and returned to their houses here on December 16 after getting married, which was opposed by her parents, they said.

The *Panchayat* also tried to pressurise the couple but they refused to be swayed.

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values held by most of the members of a group or society. What is regarded as 'deviant' is as widely variable as the norms and values that distinguish different cultures and subcultures. Likewise ideas of deviance are challenged and change from one period to another. For example, a woman choosing to become an astronaut may be considered deviant at one time, and be applauded at another time even in the same society. You are already familiar with how sociology is different from common sense. The specific terms and concepts discussed in this chapter will help you further to move towards a sociological understanding of society.

Glossary

Conflict Theories : A sociological perspective that focuses on the tensions, divisions and competing interests present in human societies. Conflict theorists believe that the scarcity and value of resources in society produces conflict as groups struggle to gain access to and control those resources. Many conflict theorists have been strongly influenced by the writings of Marx.

Functionalism : A theoretical perspective based on the notion that social events can best be explained in terms of the function they perform — that is the contribution they make to the continuity of a society. And on a view of society as a complex system whose various parts work in relationship to each other in a way that needs to be understood.

Identity : The distinctive characteristic of a person's character or the character of a group which relate to who they are and what is meaningful to them. Some of the main sources of identity include gender, nationality or ethnicity, social class.

Means of Production : The means whereby the production of material goods is carried on in a society, including not just technology but the social relations between producers.

Microsociology and Macrosociology : The study of everyday behaviour in situations of face-to-face interaction is usually called microsociology. In microsociology, analysis occurs at the level of individuals or small groups. It differs from macrosociology, which concerns itself with large-scale social systems, like the political system or the economic order. Though they appear to be distinct, they are closely connected.

Natal : It relates to the place or time of one's birth.

Norms : Rules of behaviour which reflect or embody a culture's values, either prescribing a given type of behaviour, or forbidding it. Norms are always

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backed by sanctions of one kind or another, varying from informal disapproval to physical punishment or execution.

Sanctions : A mode of reward or punishment that reinforce socially expected forms of behaviour.

Exercises

1. Why do we need to use special terms and concepts in sociology?
2. As a member of society you must be interacting with and in different groups. How do you see these groups from a sociological perspective?
3. What have you observed about the stratification system existing in your society? How are individual lives affected by stratification?
4. What is social control? Do you think the modes of social control in different spheres of society are different? Discuss.
5. Identify the different roles and status that you play and are located in. Do you think roles and status change? Discuss when and how they change.

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CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

I

INTRODUCTION

This book began with a discussion about the interaction of the individual and society. We saw that each of us as individuals, occupies a place or location in society. Each one of us has a status and a role or roles, but these are not simply what we as individuals choose. They are not like roles a film actor may or may not opt to do. There are social institutions that constrain and control, punish and reward. They could be 'macro' social institutions like the state or 'micro' ones like the family. Here in this chapter we are introduced to social institutions, and also to how sociology/social anthropology studies them. This chapter puts forth a very brief idea of some of the central areas where important social institutions are located namely: (i) family, marriage and kinship; (ii) politics; (iii) economics; (iv) religion; and (v) education.

In the broadest sense, an institution is something that works according to rules established or at least acknowledged by law or by custom. And whose regular and continuous operation cannot be understood without taking those rules into account. Institutions impose constraints on individuals. They also provide him/her with opportunities.

An institution can also be viewed as an end in itself. Indeed people have viewed family, religion, state or even education as an end in itself.

Activity 1

Think of examples of how people sacrifice for family, for religion or for the state.

We have already seen that there are conflicting and different understandings of concepts within sociology. We have also been introduced to the functionalist and conflict perspective, and seen how differently they saw the same thing, for instance, stratification or social control. Not surprisingly, therefore, there are different forms of understanding of social institutions as well.

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A functionalist view understands social institutions as a complex set of social norms, beliefs, values and role relationship that arise in response to the needs of society. Social institutions exist to satisfy social needs. Accordingly we find informal and formal social institutions in societies. Institutions such as family and religion are examples of informal social institutions while law and (formal) education are formal social institutions.

A conflict view holds that all individuals are not placed equally in society. All social institutions whether familial, religious, political, economic, legal or educational will operate in the interest of the dominant sections of society be it class, caste, tribe or gender. The dominant social section not only dominates political and economic institutions but also ensures that the ruling class ideas become the ruling ideas of a society. This is very different from the idea that there are general needs of a society.

As you go about reading this chapter, see whether you can think of examples to show how social institutions constrain and also offer opportunities to individuals. Notice whether they impact different sections of society unequally. For instance, we could ask, "How does the family constrain as well provide opportunities to men and women?" Or "How do political or legal institutions affect the privileged and dispossessed?"

II

Family, Marriage and Kinship

Perhaps no other social entity appears more 'natural' than the family. Often we are prone to assume that all families are like the ones we live in. No other social institution appears more universal and unchanging. Sociology and social anthropology have over many decades, conducted field research across cultures to show how the institutions of family, marriage and kinship are important in all societies and yet their character is different in different societies. They have also shown how the family (the private sphere) is linked to economic, political, cultural and educational (the public) spheres. This may remind you of why there is a need to share and borrow from different disciplines, which we have discussed in Chapter 1.

According to the functionalists the family performs important tasks, which contribute to society's basic needs and helps perpetuate social order. The functionalist perspective argues that modern industrial societies function best if women look after the family and men earn the family livelihood. In India studies however suggest that families need not become nuclear in an industrial pattern of economy (Singh 1993: 83). This is but one example to show how trends based on experiences of one society cannot necessarily be generalised.

The nuclear family is seen as the unit best equipped to handle the demands of industrial society by the

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functionalists. In such a family one adult can work outside home while the second adult cares for the home and children. In practical terms, this specialisation of roles within the nuclear family involves the husband adopting the 'instrumental' role as breadwinner, and the wife assuming the 'affective', emotional role in domestic settings (Giddens 2001). This vision is questionable not just because it is gender unjust but because empirical studies across cultures and history show that it is untrue. Indeed, as you will see in the discussion on work and economy how in contemporary industries like the garment export, women form a large part of the labour force. Such a separation also suggests that men are necessarily the heads of households. This is not necessarily true as the box which is given below shows.

Variation in Family Forms

A central debate in India has been about the shift from nuclear family to joint families. We have already seen how sociology questions common sense impressions. The fact is that nuclear families have always existed in India particularly among deprived castes and classes.

The sociologist A.M. Shah remarks that in post-independent India the joint family has steadily increased. The contributing factor is the increasing life expectancy in India according to him. It has increased from 32.5 – 55.4 years for men and from 31.7– 55.7 years for women during the period 1941– 50 to 1981 - 85. Consequently, the proportion of aged people (60 years and above) in the total population has increased. "We have to ask" writes Shah:

> "in what kind of household do these elderly people live? I submit, most of them live in joint household" (Shah 1998).

This again is a broad generalisation. But in the spirit of the sociological perspective, it cautions us against blindly believing a common sense impression that the joint family is fast eroding. And alerts us to the need for careful comparative and empirical studies.

Studies have shown how diverse family forms are found in different

Female headed households

When men migrate to urban areas, women have to plough and manage the agricultural fields. Many a time they become the sole providers of their families. Such households are known as female headed households. Widowhood too might create such familial arrangement. Or it may happen when men get remarried and stop sending remittance to their wives, children and other dependents. In such a situation, women have to ensure the maintenance of the family. Among the Kolams, a tribal community in south-eastern Maharashtra and northern Andhra Pradesh, a female headed household is an accepted norm.

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societies. With regard to the rule of residence, some societies are matrilocal in their marriage and family customs while others are patrilocal. In the first case, the newly married couple stays with the woman's parents, whereas in the second case the couple lives with the man's parents. A patriarchal family structure exists where the men exercise authority and dominance, and matriarchy where the women play a major role in decision-making in the family. While matrilineal societies exist, the same cannot be claimed about matriarchal societies.

Families are Linked to other Social Spheres and Families Change

Often in our everyday life we look at the family as distinct and separate from other spheres such as the economic or political. However, as you will see for yourself the family, the household, its structure and norms are closely linked to the rest of society. An interesting example is that of the unintended consequences of the German unification. During the post-unification period in the 1990s Germany witnessed a rapid decline in marriage

Notice how families and residences are different

Work and Home

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because the new German state withdrew all the protection and welfare schemes which were provided to the families prior to the unification. With growing sense of economic insecurity people responded by refusing to marry. This can also be understood as a case of unintended consequence (Chapter 1).

Family and kinship are thus subject to change and transformation due to macro economic processes but the direction of change need not always be similar for all countries and regions. Moreover, change does not mean the complete erosion of previous norms and structure. Change and continuity co-exist.

How gendered is the family?

The belief is that the male child will support the parents in the old age and the female child will leave on marriage results in families investing more in a male child. Despite the biological fact that a female baby has better chances of survival than a male baby the rate of infant mortality among female children is higher in comparison to male children in lower age group in India.

The Institution of Marriage

Historically marriage has been found to exist in a wide variety of forms in

Activity 2

A Telegu expression states: 'Bringing up a daughter is like watering a plant in another's courtyard'. Find out other such sayings that are contrary. Discuss how popular sayings reflect the social arrangement of a society,

Sex Ratio in India between 1901-2011

Year	*Sex Ratio*	*Year*	*Sex Ratio*
1901	972	1961	941
1911	964	1971	930
1921	955	1981	934
1931	950	1991	926
1941	945	2001	933
1951	946	2011	940

The incidence of female foeticide has led to a sudden decline in the sex ratio. The child sex ratio has declined from 934 per thousand males in 1991 to 919 in 2011. The percentage of decline in the child sex ratio is more alarming. The situation of prosperous states like Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra and Utter Pradesh is all the more grave. In Punjab the child sex ratio has declined to 846 girls per 1,000 boys. In some of the districts of Haryana it has fallen below 800.

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different societies. It has also been found to perform differing functions. Indeed, the manner in which marriage partners are arranged reveals an astonishing variety of modes and customs.

Activiy 3

Find out about the different ways that different societies go about finding marriage partners.

Forms of Marriage

Marriage has a large variety of forms. These forms can be identified on the basis of the number of partners and rules governing who can marry whom. In terms of the number of partners that can legitimately enter into matrimony, we have two forms of marriage, namely, monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy restricts the individual to one spouse at a time. Under this system, at any given time a man can have only one wife and a woman can have only one husband. Even where polygamy is permitted, in actual practice, monogamy is more widely prevalent.

In many societies, individuals are permitted to marry again, often on the death of the first spouse or after divorce. But they cannot have more than one spouse at one and the same time. Such monogamous marriages are termed serial monogamy. Remarriages on the death of a wife have been a norm for men for the most part. But as all of you are aware that the right for upper caste Hindu widows was denied and that the campaign for widow remarriage was a major issue in the 19th century reform movements. What you are probably less aware is that today in modern India nearly 10 per cent of all women and 55 per cent of women over fifty years are widows (Chen 2000:353).

Polygamy denotes marriage to more than one mate at one time and takes the form of either: Polygyny (one husband with two or more wives) or Polyandry (one wife with two or more husbands). Usually where economic conditions are harsh, polyandry may be one response of society, since in such situations a single male cannot adequately support a wife and children. Also, extreme poverty conditions pressurise a group to limit its population.

The Matter of Arranging Marriages: Rules and Prescriptions

In some societies, the decisions regarding mate selection are made by parents/relatives; in some other societies individuals are relatively free to choose their own mates.

Rules of Endogamy and Exogamy

In some societies these restrictions are subtle, while in some others, individuals who can or cannot be married, are more explicitly and specifically defined. Forms of marriage based on rules governing eligibility/ ineligibility of mates is classified as endogamy and exogamy.

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Endogamy requires an individual to marry within a culturally defined group of which he or she is already a member, as for example, caste. Exogamy, the reverse of endogamy, requires the individual to marry outside of his/her own group. Endogamy and exogamy are in reference to certain kinship units, such as, clan, caste and racial, ethnic or religious groupings. In India, village exogamy is practised in certain parts of north India. Village exogamy ensured that daughters were married into families from villages far away from home. This arrangement ensured smooth transition and adjustment of the bride into the affinal home without interference of her kinsmen. The geographical distance plus the unequal relationship in the patrilineal system ensured that married daughters did not get to see their parents too often. Thus parting from natal home was a sad occasion and is the theme of folk songs, which depict the pain of departure.

Father, we are like flocks of bird
We shall fly away; Our flight will be long,
We know not to which,
Region we will go.
Father, my palanquin cannot
Pass through your palace,
(because the door is too small)
Daughter, I shall remove a brick
(to enlarge the passage for your palanquin),
You must go to your home.

(Chanana 1993:WS26)

Rock-a-bye-baby, combs in your pretty hair,
The bridegroom will come soon and take you away
The drums beat loudly, the shehnai is playing softly
A stranger's son has come to fetch me
Come my playmates, come with our toys
Let us play, for I shall never play again
When I go off to the strangers' house.

(Dube 2001: 94)

Activity 4

Collect different wedding songs and discuss how they reflect the social dynamics of marriages and of gender relations.

Activity 5

Have you ever seen matrimonial advertisements? Divide your class into groups and look at different newspapers, magazines and the internet. Discuss your findings. Do you think endogamy is still the prevalent norm? How does it help you to understand choice in marriage? More importantly, what kind of changes in society does it reflect?

Defining Some Basic Concepts, Particularly those of Family, Kinship and Marriage

A family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections,

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the adult members of which assume responsibility for caring for children. Kinship ties are connections between individuals, established either through marriage or through the lines of descent that connect blood relatives (mothers, fathers, siblings, offspring, etc.) Marriage can be defined as a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals. When two people marry, they become *kin* to one another. The marriage bond also, however, connects together a wider range of people. Parents, brothers, sisters and other blood relatives become relatives of the partner through marriage. The family of birth is called family of orientation and the family in which a person is married is called the family of procreation. The kin who are related through "blood" are called consanguineous kin while the kin who are related through marriage are called affines. As we move on to the next section on work and economic institutions, you will notice how the family and economic life are closely interconnected.

III

Work and Economic Life

What is Work?

As children and young students we imagine what kind of 'work' we will do when we grow up. 'Work' here quite clearly refers to paid employment. This is the most widely understood sense of 'work' in modern times.

This in fact is an oversimplified view. Many types of work do not conform to the idea of paid employment. Much of the work done in the informal economy, for example, is not recorded in any direct way in the official employment statistics. The term 'informal economy' refers to transactions outside the sphere of regular employment, sometimes involving the exchange of cash for services provided, but also often involving the direct exchange of goods or services.

We can define work, whether paid or unpaid, as the carrying out of tasks requiring the expenditure of mental and

There was no occupation, which Tiny's Granny had not tried at some stage of her life. From the time she was old enough to hold her own cup she had started working at odd jobs in people's houses in return for her two meals a day and cast-off clothes. Exactly what the words 'odd jobs' mean, only those know who have been kept at them at an age when they ought to have been laughing and playing with other children. Anything from the uninteresting duty of shaking the baby's rattle to massaging the master's head comes under the category of 'odd jobs' (Chugtai 2004:125).

Find out more about the various kinds of 'work' done from your own observation or literature or even films. Discuss.

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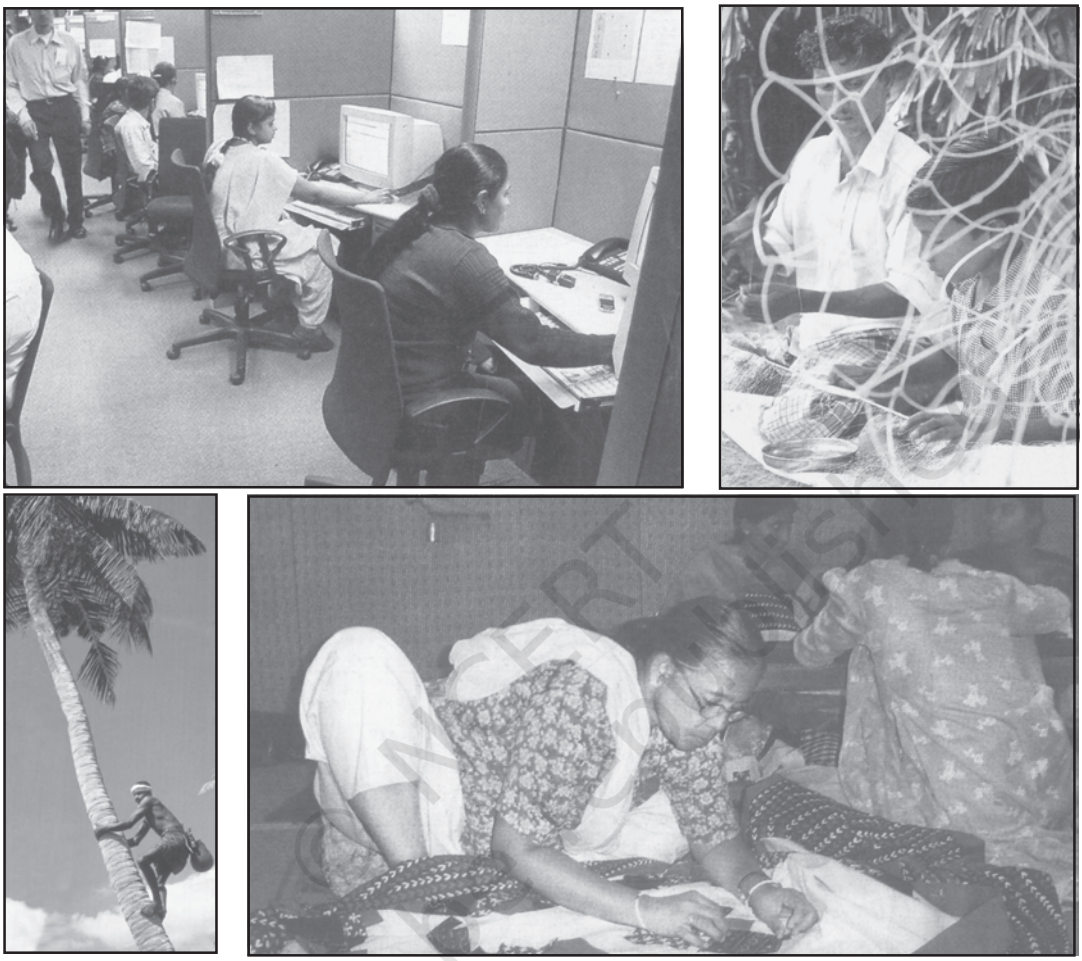

Different Types of Work

physical effort, which has as its objective the production of goods and services that cater to human needs.

Modern Forms of Work and Division of Labour

In pre-modern forms of society most people worked in the field or cared for the livestock. In the industrially developed society only a tiny proportion of the population works in agriculture, and farming itself has become industrialised — it is carried on largely by means of machines rather

Activity 6

Find out the proportion of Indians who are in rural based occupations. Make a list of these occupations.

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than by human hand. In a country like India, the larger share of the population continues to be involved in rural agricultural or other rural based occupations.

There are other trends in India too, for instance an expansion of the service sector.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the economic system of modern societies is the existence of a highly complex division of labour. Work has been divided into an enormous number of different occupations in which people specialise. In traditional societies, non-agricultural work entailed the mastery of a craft. Craft skills were learned through a lengthy period of apprenticeship, and the worker normally carried out all aspects of the production process from beginning to end.

Activity 7

Find out whether there has been a shift to the service sector in India in recent times. Which are these sectors?

Modern society also witnesses a shift in the location of work. Before industrialisation, most work took place at home and was completed collectively by all members of the household. Advances in industrial technology, such as machinery operating on electricity and coal, contributed to the separation of work and home. Factories owned by capitalist entrepreneurs became the focal point of industrial development.

Activity 8

Have you seen a master weaver at work? Find out how long one piece of shawl may take to make?

People seeking jobs in factories were trained to perform a specialised task and receive a wage for this work. Managers supervised the work, for their task was to enhance worker productivity and discipline.

One of the main features of modern societies is an enormous expansion of economic interdependence. We are all dependent on an immense number of other workers-stretching right across the world- for the products and services that sustain our lives. With few exceptions, the vast majority of people in modern societies do not produce the food they eat, the houses they live in or the material goods they consume.

Activity 9

Make a list of the food that you eat, the materials that were used to make the houses you live in, the clothes you wear. Find out how and who made them.

Transformation of Work

Industrial processes were broken down into simple operations that could be precisely timed, organised and monitored. Mass production demands mass markets. One of the most significant innovations was the

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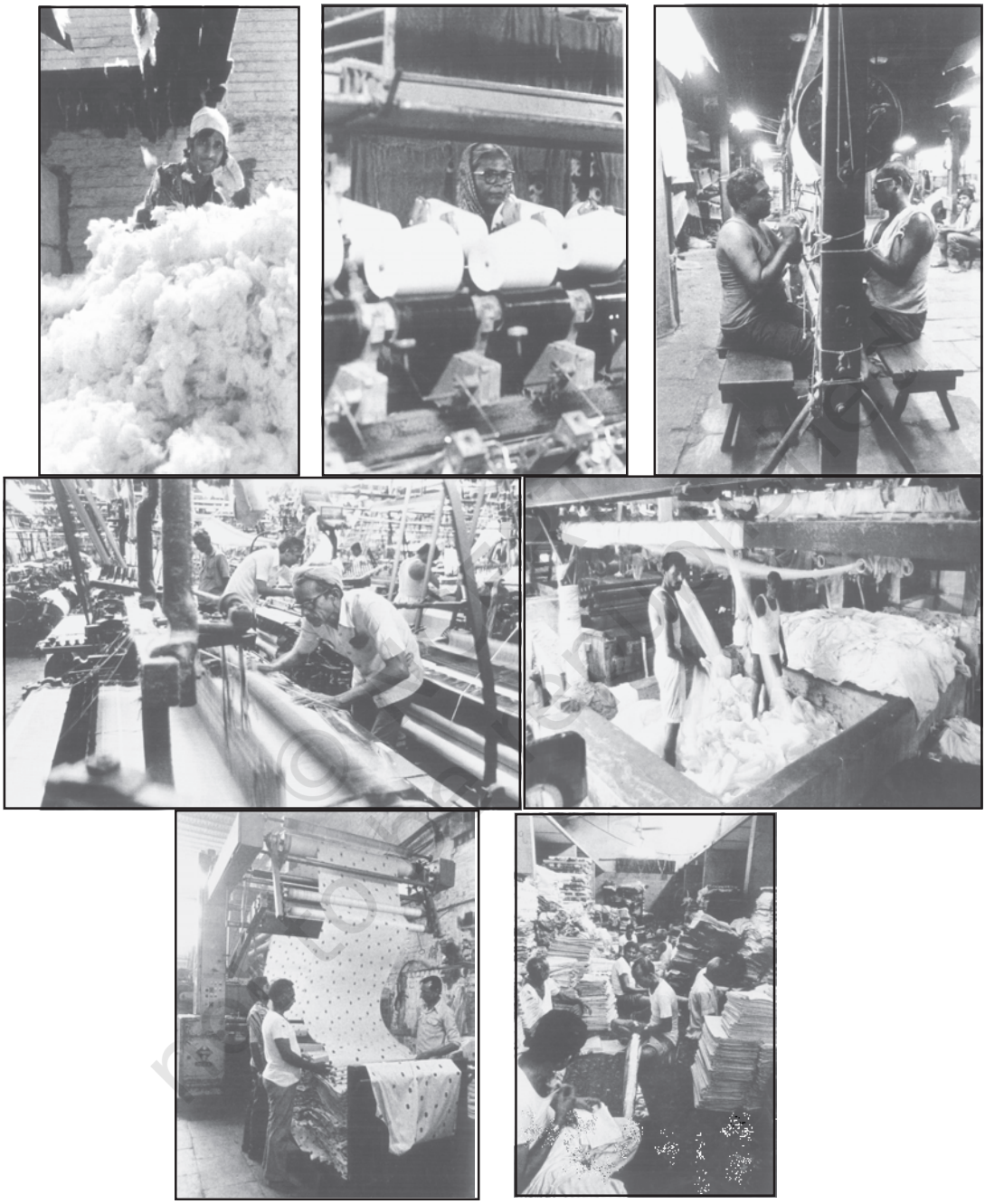
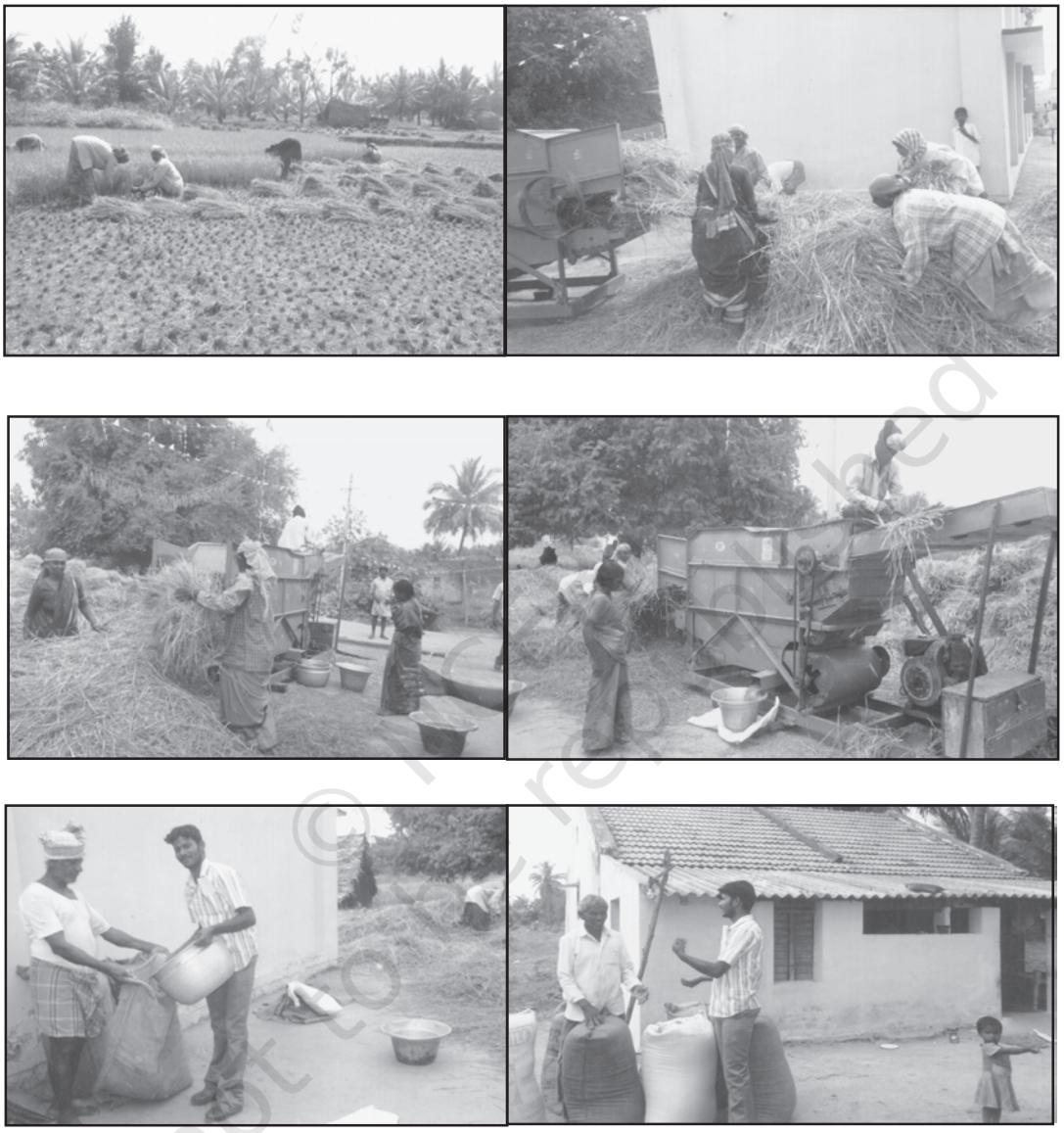


Discuss the two forms of production in the two sets of visuals
Cloth production in a factory



Threshing of paddy in a village

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construction of a moving assembly line. Modern industrial production needed expensive equipment and continuous monitoring of employees through monitoring or surveillance systems.

Over the last decades there has been a shift to what is often called 'flexible production' and 'decentralisation of work'. It is argued that in this period of globalisation, it is the growing competition between firms and countries that makes it essential for firms to organise production suiting the changing market conditions. To illustrate how this new system operates and what the implications may be for the workers, read the quote from a study of the garment industry in Bangalore.

> The industry is essentially part of a long supply chain, and the freedom of manufacturers is to that extent extremely limited. There are, in fact more than a hundred operations between the designer and the final consumer. In this chain, only 15 are in the hands of the manufacturer. Any serious agitation for a rise in wages would lead manufacturers to shift their operations to other localities, beyond the reach of unionists... whether it is the payment of the existing minimum wage, or its substantial revision upwards, what is important is to enlist the support of the retailer in order to create the necessary pressure upon the government and local agencies for a higher wage structure and its effective implementation. Thus the vision here is that of the creation of an international opinion forum (Roy Choudhury 2005:2254).

Read the above given report carefully. Notice how the new organisation of production and a body of customers outside the country have altered the economics and the politics of production.

IV

Politics

Political institutions are concerned with the distribution of power in society. Two concepts, which are critical to the understanding of political institutions, are power and authority. Power is the ability of individuals or groups to carry out their will even when opposed by others. It implies that those who hold power do so at the cost of others. There is a fixed amount of power in a society and if some wield power others do not. In other words, an individual or group does not hold power in isolation, they hold it in relation to others.

This notion of power is fairly inclusive and extends from family elders assigning domestic duties to their children to principals enforcing discipline in school; from the General Manager of a factory distributing work among the executives to political leaders regulating programmes of their parties. The principal has power to maintain discipline in school. The president of a political party possesses power to expel a member from the party. In each case, an individual or group has power to the extent to which others abide by their will. In this sense, political activities or politics is concerned with 'power'.

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But how is this 'power' applied to achieve its aim? Why do people comply with others' commands? Answers to these questions could be found with reference to a related concept of 'authority'. Power is exercised through authority. Authority is that form of power, which is accepted as legitimate, that is, as right and just. It is institutionalised because it is based on legitimacy. People in general accept the power of those in authority as they consider their control to be fair and justified. Often ideologies exist that help this process of legitimation.

Stateless Societies

Empirical studies of stateless societies by social anthropologists over sixty years ago demonstrated how order is maintained without a modern governmental apparatus. There was instead the balanced opposition between parts; cross-cutting alliances, based on kinship, marriage and residence; rites and ceremonies involving the participation of friends and foes.

As we all know, the modern state has a fixed structure and formal procedures. Yet are not some of the informal mechanisms mentioned above as features of stateless societies present also in state societies?

The Concept of the State

A state exists where there is a political apparatus of government (institutions like a parliament or congress, plus civil service officials) ruling over a given territory. Government authority is backed by a legal system and by the capacity to use military force to implement its policies. The functionalist perspective sees the state as representing the interests of all sections of society. The conflict perspective sees the state as representing the dominant sections of society.

Modern states are very different from traditional states. These states are defined by sovereignty, citizenship and, most often, ideas of nationalism. Sovereignty refers to the undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area.

The sovereign state was not, at first, one in which citizenship carried with it rights of political participation. These were achieved largely through struggles, which limited the power of monarchs, or actively overthrew them. The French Revolution and our own Indian independence struggle are two instances of such movements.

Citizenship rights include civil, political and social rights. Civil rights involve the freedom of individuals to live where they choose; freedom of speech and religion; the right to own property; and the right to equal justice before the law. Political rights include the right to participate in elections and to stand for public office. In most countries governments were reluctant to admit the principle of universal franchise. In the early years not only women, but a large section of the male population was excluded as holding a certain amount of property was an eligibility criterion. Women had to wait longer for the vote.

The third type of citizenship rights are social rights. These concern the

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Activity 10

Find out when women got voting rights in different countries. Why do you think that despite the right to vote and the right to stand for public office, women are so inadequately represented? Will power in its wider sense be a useful concept to understand this under-representation in the Parliament and other bodies? Does the existing division of labour within families and households impact women's participation in political life? Find out why there is a demand for 33 per cent reservation for women in the Parliament.

prerogative of every individual to enjoy a certain minimum standard of economic welfare and security. They include such rights as health benefits, unemployment allowance, setting of minimum level of wages. The broadening of social or welfare rights led to the welfare state, which was established in Western societies since the Second World War. States of the erstwhile socialist countries had far-reaching provision in this sector. In most developing countries, this was virtually non-existent. All over the world today these social rights are being attacked as liabilities on the state and hindrances to economic growth.

Nationalism can be defined as a set of symbols and beliefs providing the sense of being part of a single political community. Thus, individuals feel a sense of pride and belonging, in being 'British', 'Indian', 'Indonesian' or 'French'. Probably people have always felt some kind of identity with social groups of one form or another — for example, their family, clan or religious community. Nationalism, however, only made its appearance with the development of the modern state. Contemporary world is marked both by a rapid expansion of the global market as well as intense nationalist feelings and conflicts.

Sociologists are interested in the broader study of power, not just with the formal apparatus of government. They are interested in the distribution of power between parties, between classes, between castes, and

Activity 11

Collect information about different states doing away with social rights. Find out what explanation is given for this. Discuss and see whether you can see the relationship between the economic, political and social spheres.

Activity 12

Collect information of events that show the growth of global inter-connectedness as well as instances of divisions along ethnic, religious, national conflicts. Discuss how politics and economics may have a part to play in them.

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between communities based on race, language and religion. Its focus is not just on what may be called specifically political association, such as state legislatures, town councils and political parties but also associations such as schools, banks and religious institutions whose aims are not primarily political. The scope of sociology has been wide. Its range has extended from the study of international movements (such as women or environmental) to village factions.

V

RELIGION

Religion has been a subject of study and reflection for a very long time. In Chapter 1, we have seen how sociological findings about society are different from religious reflections. The sociological study of religion is different from a religious or theological study of religion in many ways. One, it conducts empirical studies of how religions actually function in society and its relationship to other institutions. Two, it uses a comparative method. Three, it investigates religious beliefs, practices and institutions in relation to other aspects of society and culture.

The empirical method means that the sociologist does not have a judgemental approach to religious phenomena. The comparative method is important because in a sense it brings all societies on level with each other. It helps to study without bias and prejudice. The sociological perspective means that religious life can be made intelligible only by relating it to domestic life, economic life and political life.

Religion exists in all known societies, although religious beliefs and practices vary from culture to culture. Characteristics that all religions seem to share are:

- set of symbols, invoking feelings of reverence or awe;
- rituals or ceremonies;
- a community of believers.

The rituals associated with religion are very diverse. Ritual acts may include praying, chanting, singing, eating certain kinds of food (or refraining from doing so), fasting on certain days, and so on. Since ritual acts are oriented towards religious symbols, they are usually seen as quite distinct from the habits and procedures of ordinary life. Lighting a candle or *diya* to honour the divine differs completely in its significance from doing so simply to light a room. Religious rituals are often carried out by an individual in his/her personal everyday life. But all religions also involve ceremonials practised collectively by believers. Regular ceremonials normally occur in special places — churches, mosques, temples, shrines.

Religion is about the sacred realm. Think of what members of different religions do before entering a sacred realm. For example covering one's head, or not covering one's head, taking off shoes, or wearing particular kind of clothes, etc. What is common to them all is the feeling of awe, recognition and respect for sacred places or situations.

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Sociologists of religion, following Emile Durkheim, are interested in understanding this sacred realm which every society distinguishes from the profane. In most cases, the sacred includes an element of the supernatural. Often the sacred quality of a tree or a temple comes with the belief that it is sacred precisely because there is some supernatural force behind it. However, it is important to keep in mind that some religions like early Buddhism and Confucianism had no conception of the supernatural, but did allow sufficient reverence for things and persons which they considered sacred.

Studying religion sociologically lets us ask questions about the relationship of religion with other social institutions. Religion has had a very close relationship with power and politics. For instance, periodically in history there have been religious movements for social change, like various anti-caste movements or movements against gender discrimination. Religion is not just a matter of the private belief of an individual but it also has a public character. And it is this public character of religion, which has an important bearing on other institutions of society.

We have seen how sociology looks at power in a wide sense. It is, therefore, of sociological interest to look at the relationship between political and religious spheres. Classical sociologists believed that as societies modernised, religion would become less influential over various spheres of life. The concept secularisation describes this process. Contemporary events suggest a persisting role of religion in various aspects of society. Why do you think this is so?

A pioneering work by Max Weber (1864-1920) demonstrates how sociology looks at religion in its relationship to other aspects of social and economic behaviour. Weber argues that Calvinism (a branch of Protestant Christianity) exerted an important influence on the emergence and growth of capitalism as a mode of economic organisation. The Calvinists believed that the world was created for the glory of God, meaning that any work in this world had to be done for His glory, making even mundane works acts of worship. More importantly, however, the Calvinists also believed in the concept of predestination, which meant that whether one will go to heaven or hell was pre-ordained. Since there was no way of knowing whether one has been assigned heaven or hell, people sought to look for signs of God's will in this world, in their own occupations. Thus if a person in whatever profession, was consistent and successful in his or her work, it was interpreted as a sign of God's happiness. The money earned was not to be used for worldly consumption; rather the ethics of Calvinism was to live frugally. This meant that investment became something like a holy creed. At the heart of capitalism is the concept of investment, which is about investing capital to make more goods, which create more profit, which in turn creates more capital. Thus Weber was able to argue that religion, in this case Calvinism, does have an influence on economic development.

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Religion cannot be studied as a separate entity. Social forces always and invariably influence religious institutions. Political debates, economic situations and gender norms will always influence religious behaviour. Conversely, religious norms influence and sometimes even determine social understanding. Women constitute half of the world's population. Sociologically therefore it becomes important to ask what relationship this vast segment of human population has with religion. Religion is an important part of society and is inextricably tied to other parts. The task of sociologists is to unravel these various interconnections. In traditional societies, religion usually plays a central part in social life. Religious symbols and rituals are often integrated with the material and artistic culture of society. Read the extract which is given below in the box to get a sense of how sociology studies religion.

VI

EDUCATION

Education is a life–long process, involving both formal and informal institutions of learning. Here we are however confining ourselves only to school education. We are all aware how important getting admission into a school is. We also know, for many of us, school is a step towards higher education and finally employment. For some of us it may mean acquiring some necessary social skills. What is common in all cases is that there is a felt need for education.

Sociology understands this need as a process of transmission/communication of group heritage that is common to all societies. There is a qualitative distinction between simple societies and complex, modern societies. In the case of the former there was no need for formal schooling.

> Many extraneous factors have affected the traditional lives of the religious specialists. The most important of these are the growth of new employment and educational opportunities in Nasik... after Independence, the way of life of the priests has been changing fast. Now the sons and daughters are sent to school, and are trained for jobs other than traditional ones... Like all places of pilgrimage, Nasik also gave rise to supplementary centres around religious activities. It was a normal routine for a pilgrim to take home the sacred water of the Godavari in a copper pot. The coppersmiths provided these wares. The pilgrims also bought wares, which they took home to be distributed as gifts among their relatives and friends. For long Nasik was known for its proficient craftsmen in brass, copper and silver... Since the demand for their wares is intermittent and uncertain, not all the adult males can be supported by this occupation... Many craftsmen have entered industry and business-both small and large scale (Acharya 1974:399-401).

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Children learnt customs and the broader way of life by participating in activities with their adults. In complex societies, we saw there is an increasing economic division of labour, separation of work from home, need for specialised learning and skill attainment, rise of state systems, nations and complex sets of symbols and ideas. How do you get educated informally in such context? How would parents or other adults informally communicate all that has to be known to the next generation? Education in such social context has to be formal and explicit.

Furthermore modern complex societies, in contrast to simple societies, rest on abstract universalistic values. This is what distinguishes it from a simple society that depends on particularistic values, based on family, kin, tribe, caste or religion. Schools in modern societies are designed to promote uniformity, standardised aspirations and universalistic values. There are many ways of doing this. For example one can speak of 'uniform dress for school children'. Can you think of other features that promote standardisation?

For Emile Durkheim, no society can survive without a 'common base-a certain number of ideas, sentiments and practices which education must inculcate in all children indiscriminately, to whatever social category they belong' (Durkheim 1956:69). Education should prepare the child for a special occupation, and enable the child to internalise the core values of society.

The functionalist sociologist thus speaks in terms of general social needs and social norms. For the functionalists, education maintains and renews the social structure, transmits and develops culture. The educational system is an important mechanism for the selection and allocation of individuals in their future roles in the society. It is also regarded as the ground for proving one's ability and hence selective agency for different status according to their abilities. Recall our discussion on the functionalist understanding of roles and stratification in Chapter 2.

For the sociologists who perceive society as unequally differentiated, education functions as a main

Discuss the visuals (Two types of schools)

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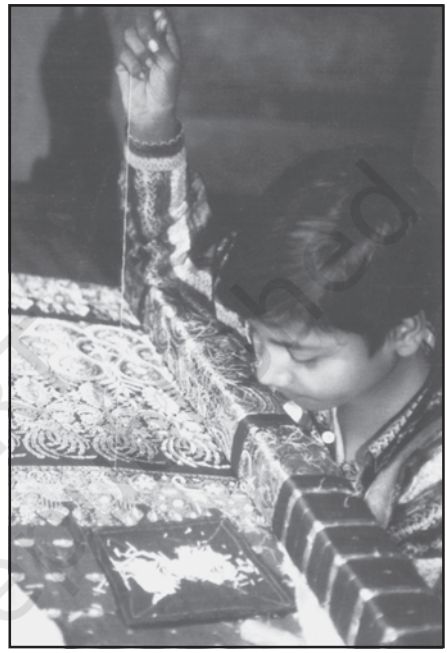
stratifying agent. And at the same time the inequality of educational opportunity is also a product of social stratification. In other words, we go to different kinds of schools depending on our socio-economic background. And because we go to some kind of schools, we acquire different kind of privileges and finally opportunities.

For instance some argue that schooling 'intensifies the existing divide between the elite and the masses.' Children going to privileged schools learn to be confident while children deprived of that may feel the opposite (Pathak 2002:151). However, there are many more children who simply cannot attend school or drop out. For instance a study reports :

> You are seeing some children in the school now. If you come during the cultivation season you may see almost zero attendance from the SC and ST children. They all take some household responsibilities while the parents are out to work. And the girl children of these communities seldom attend school as they do various kinds of work both domestic and income generating. A 10-year-old girl picks dry cow dung to sell, for example (Pratichi 2002:60).

The report indicates how gender and caste discrimination impinge upon the chances of education. Recall how we began this book in Chapter 1 about a child's chances for a good job being shaped by a host of social factors. Your understanding of the way social institutions function should help you analyse the process better now.



Discuss the visual

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Activity 13

A study of a kindergarten suggested that children learn that:

- 'work activities are more important than play activities'.
- 'work includes any and all teacher-directed activities.'
- 'work is compulsory and free time activities are called play' (Apple 1979:102).

What do you think? Discuss.

GLOSSARY

Citizen : A member of a political community, having both rights and duties associated with that membership.

Division of Labour : The specialisation of work tasks, by means of which different occupations are combined within a production system. All societies have at least some rudimentary form of division of labour. With the development of industrialism, however, the division of labour becomes vastly more complex than in any prior type of production system. In the modern world, the division of labour is international in scope.

Gender : Social expectations about behaviour regarded as appropriate for the members of each sex. Gender is seen as a basic organising principle of society.

Empirical Investigation : Factual enquiry carried out in any given area of sociological study.

Endogamy : When marriage is within a specific caste, class or tribal group.

Exogamy : When marriage occurs outside a certain group of relations.

Ideology : Shared ideas or beliefs, which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups. Ideologies are found in all societies in which there are systematic and engrained inequalities between groups. The concept of ideology connects closely with that of power, since ideological systems serve to legitimise the differential power which groups hold.

Legitimacy : The belief that a particular political order is just and valid.

Monogamy : When marriage involves one husband and one wife alone.

Polygamy : When marriage involves more than one mate at one time.

Polyandry : When more than one man is married to a woman.

Polygyny : When more than one woman is married to a man.

Service Industries : Industries concerned with the production of services rather than manufactured goods, such as the travel industry.

State Society : A society which possesses a formal apparatus of government.

Stateless Society : A society which lacks formal institutions of government.

Social Mobility : Movement from one status or occupation to another.

Sovereignty : The undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area.

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Exercises

1. Note the marriage rules that are followed in your society. Compare your observations with these made by other students in the class. Discuss.
2. Find out how membership, residence pattern and the mode of interaction changes in the family with broader economic, political and cultural changes, for instance migration.
3. Write an essay on 'work'. Focus on both the range of occupations, which exist and how they change.
4. Discuss the kind of rights that exist in your society. How do they affect your life?
5. How does sociology study religion?
6. Write an essay on school as a social institution. Draw from both your reading as well as your personal observations.
7. Discuss how these social institutions interact with each other. You can start the discussion from yourself as a senior school student. And move on to how you are shaped by different social institutions. Are you entirely controlled or can you also resist and redefine social institutions?

Readings

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CHAPTER 4

CULTURE AND SOCIALISATION

I

INTRODUCTION

'Culture', like 'society', is a term used frequently and sometimes vaguely. This chapter is meant to help us define it more precisely and to appreciate its different aspects. In everyday conversation, culture is confined to the arts, or alludes to the way of life of certain classes or even countries. Sociologists and anthropologists study the social contexts within which culture exists. They take culture apart to try and understand the relations between its various aspects.

Just like you need a map to navigate over unknown space or territory, you need culture to conduct or behave yourself in society. Culture is the common understanding, which is learnt and developed through social interaction with others in society. A common understanding within a group demarcates it from others and gives it an identity. But cultures are never finished products. They are always changing and evolving. Elements are constantly being added, deleted, expanded, shrunk and rearranged. This makes cultures dynamic as functioning units.

Activity 1

How do you greet another person in your 'culture'? Do you greet different kinds of persons (friends, older relatives, the other gender, people from other groups) differently? Discuss any awkward experience you may have had when you did not know how you should greet a person. Is that because you did not share a common 'culture'? But next time round you will know what to do. Your cultural knowledge thereby expands and rearranges itself.

The capacity of individuals to develop a common understanding with others and to draw the same meanings from signs and symbols is what distinguishes humans from other animals. Creating meaning is a social virtue as we learn it in the company of

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others in families, groups and communities. We learn the use of tools and techniques as well as the non-material signs and symbols through interaction with family members, friends and colleagues in different social settings. Much of this knowledge is systematically described and conveyed either orally or through books.

For example, notice the interaction below. Notice how words and facial expressions convey meaning in a conversation.

> Commuter asks autodriver: "Indiranagar?" The verb that conveys the question — "*Bartheera*?" or "Will you come?" — is implied in the arch of the eyebrow. Driver jerks his head in the direction of the back seat if the answer is "Yes". If it is "No" (which is more likely the case as every Bangalorean knows) he might just drive away or grimace as if he has heard a bad word or shake his head with a smile that seems to suggest a "Sorry", all depending on the mood of the moment.

This learning prepares us for carrying out our roles and responsibilities in society. You have already dealt with status and roles. What we learn in the family is primary socialisation, while that which happens in school and other institutions are secondary socialisation. We shall discuss this in greater detail later in this chapter.

II

Diverse Settings, Different Cultures

Humans live in a variety of natural settings like in the mountains and plains, in forests and clear lands, in deserts and river valleys, in islands and main lands. They also inhabit different social set up like in villages, towns and cities. In different environments, people adapt different strategies to cope with the natural and social conditions. This leads to the emergence of diverse ways of life or cultures.

Disparities in coping mechanisms were evident during the devastating tsunami of 26 December 2004, which affected some parts of the Tamil Nadu and Kerala coast as well as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India. People on the mainland and islands are integrated into a relatively modern way of life. The fisherfolk and the service personnel in the islands were caught unaware and suffered large scale devastation and much loss of life. On the other hand, the 'primitive' tribal communities in the islands like the Onges, Jarawas, Great Andamanese or Shompens who had no access to modern science and technology, foresaw the calamity based on their experiential knowledge and saved themselves by moving on to higher ground. This shows that having access to modern science and technology does not make modern cultures superior to the tribal cultures of the islands. Hence, cultures cannot be ranked but can be judged adequate or inadequate in terms of their ability to cope with the strains imposed by nature.

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Discuss how natural settings affect culture

Activity 2

Find out from at least one region other than your own how natural environment affects food habits, patterns of dwelling, clothing and the ways in which God or gods are worshipped.

Defining Culture

Often the term 'culture' is used to refer to the acquiring of refined taste in classical music, dance forms or painting. This refined taste was thought to distinguish people from the 'uncultured' masses, even concerning something we would today see as individual, like the preference for coffee over tea!

By contrast, the sociologist looks at culture not as something that distinguishes individuals, but as a way of life in which all members of society participate. Every social organisation develops a culture of its own. One early anthropological definition of culture comes from the British scholar Edward Tylor: "Culture or civilisation taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1871).

Activity 3

Identify equivalents in Indian languages for the word culture. What associations do these carry?

Discuss how the visual captures a way of life

Two generations later, the founder of the "functional school" of anthropology, Bronislaw Malinowski of Poland (1884-1942) wrote: "Culture comprises inherited artifacts, goods, technical process, ideas, habits and values" (Malinowski 1931:621-46).

Clifford Geertz suggested that we look at human actions in the same way as we look at words in a book, and see them as conveying a message. "... Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs...".The search is not for a causal explanation, but for an interpretative one, that is in search for meaning (Geertz 1973:5). Likewise Leslie White had placed a comparable emphasis on culture as a means of adding meaning to objective reality, using the example of people regarding water from a particular source as holy.

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- Do you notice anything in Malinowski's definition that is missing in Tylor's?

Apart from his mention of art, all the things listed by Tylor are non-material. This is not because Tylor himself never looked at material culture. He was in fact a museum curator, and most of his anthropological writing was based on the examination of artifacts and tools from societies across the world, which he had never visited. We can now see his definition of culture as an attempt to take into account its intangible and abstract dimensions, so as to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the societies he was studying. Malinowski happened to be stranded on an island in the Western Pacific during the First World War, and discovered thereby the value of remaining for an extended period with the society one was studying. This led to the establishment of the tradition of "field work" you will read about it in Chapter 5.

The multiple definitions of culture in anthropological studies led Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (anthropologists from the United States) to publish a comprehensive survey entitled *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* in 1952. A sample of the various definitions is presented below.

- Try comparing these definitions to see which of these or which combination of these you find most satisfactory.

You may first find yourself noticing words which recur–'way', 'learn' and 'behaviour'. However, if you then look at how each is used, you may be struck by the shifts in emphasis. The first phrase refers to mental ways but the second to the total way of life. Definitions (d), (e) and (f) lay stress on culture as what is shared and passed on among a group and down the generations. The last two phrases are the first to refer to culture as a means of directing behaviour.

Culture is...

(a)	a way of thinking, feeling, believing.
(b)	the total way of life of a people.
(c)	an abstraction from behaviour.
(d)	learned behaviour.
(e)	a storehouse of pooled learning.
(f)	the social legacy the individual acquires from his group.
(g)	a set of standardised orientations to recurrent problems.
(h)	a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour.

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Make a list of phrases you have heard containing the word 'culture'. Ask your friends and family what they mean by culture. What criteria do they use to distinguish among cultures?

Activity 4

Compare these definitions to see which of these (or combination of these) you find most satisfactory. You could do this by listing familiar uses of the word 'culture' (the culture of eighteenth century Lucknow, the culture of hospitality or the much used term 'Western culture'...). Which of the definitions best captures the impressions conveyed by each?

Dimensions of Culture

Three dimensions of culture have been distinguished :

(i) Cognitive: This refers to how we learn to process what we hear or see, so as to give it meaning (identifying the ring of a cell-phone as ours, recognising the cartoon of a politician).

(ii) Normative: This refers to rules of conduct (not opening other people's letters, performing rituals at death).

(iii) Material: This includes any activity made possible by means of materials. Materials also include tools or machines. Examples include internet 'chatting', using rice-flour paste to design *kolam* on floors.

It may have occurred to you that our understanding of material culture, especially art, is incomplete without knowledge acquired from the cognitive and normative areas. It is true that our developing understanding of social process would draw upon all these areas. But we might find that in a community where few have acquired the cognitive skill of literacy, it in fact becomes the norm for private letters to be read out by a third party. But as we see below, to focus on each of these areas separately provides many important insights.

Cognitive Aspects of Culture

The cognitive aspects of one's own culture are harder to recognise than its material aspects (which are tangible or visible or audible) and its normative aspects (which are explicitly stated). Cognition refers to understanding, how we make sense of all the information coming to us from our environment. In literate societies ideas are transcribed in books and documents and preserved in libraries, instititutions or archives. But in non-literate societies legend or lore is committed to memory and transmitted orally. There are specialist practitioners of oral tradition who are trained to remember and narrate during ritual or festive occasions.

Let us think about how writing may affect the production and consumption of art. In his influential book, *Orality and Literacy* Walter Ong cites a study of 1971 that states that only 78 of the approximately 3,000

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existing languages possess a literature. Ong suggests that material that is not written down has certain specific characteristics. There is a lot of repetition of words, to make it simpler to remember. The audience of an oral performance is likely to be more receptive and involved than would be readers of a written text from an unfamiliar culture. Texts become more elaborate when they are written.

In societies like ours historically literacy has been made available only to the more privileged. Sociological studies are often concerned with investigating how literacy can be made relevant to the lives of people whose families have never gone to school. This can lead to unexpected responses, like a vegetable-seller who asked why he needed to know the alphabet when he could mentally calculate what his customers owed him?

The contemporary world allows us to rely far more on written, audio and visual records. Yet students of Indian classical music are still discouraged from writing down what they learn rather than carrying it in their memory. We still do not know enough about the impact of the electronic media, of multiple channels, of instant accessing and surfing. Do you think these new forms impact our attention span and cognitive culture?

Normative Aspects of Culture

The normative dimension consists of folkways, mores, customs, conventions and laws. These are values or rules that guide social behaviour in different contexts. We most often follow social norms because we are used to doing it, as a result of socialisation. All social norms are accompanied by sanctions that promote conformity. We have already discussed social control in Chapter 2 .

While norms are implicit rules, laws are explicit rules. Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist has reminded us that when we try to understand another culture's norms, we must remember that there are certain implicit understandings. For example, if a person wants to show gratitude for something s/he has been given, s/he should not offer a return-gift too quickly, or it seems like an attempt to get rid of a debt, not a friendly gesture.

A law is a formal sanction defined by government as a rule or principle that its citizens must follow. Laws are explicit. They are applicable to the whole society. And a violation of the law attracts penalties and punishment. If in your home children are not allowed to stay outdoors after sundown, that is a norm. It is specific to your family and may not be applicable to all families. However, if you are caught stealing a gold necklace from someone else's home, you have violated the universally accepted law of private property and can be sent to jail after trial as punishment.

Laws, which derive from the authority of the State are the most formal definitions of acceptable behaviour. While different schools may establish different norms for students,

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laws would apply to all those accepting the authority of the State. Unlike laws, norms can vary according to status. Dominant sections of society apply dominant norms. Often these norms are discriminating. For example norms that did not allow dalits from drinking water from the same vessel or even source. Or women from moving freely in the public sphere.

Material Aspects of Culture

The material aspect refers to tools, technologies, machines, buildings and modes of transportation, as well as instruments of production and communication. In urban areas the widespread use of mobile phones, music systems, cars and buses, ATMs (automated teller machines), refrigerators and computers in everyday life indicates the dependence on technology. Even in rural areas the use of transistor radios or electric motor pumps for lifting water from below the surface for irrigation demonstrates the adoption of technological devices for increasing production.

In sum there are two principal dimensions of culture: material and non-material. While the cognitive and normative aspects are non-material, the material dimension is crucial to increase production and enhance the quality of life. For integrated functioning of a culture the material and non-material dimensions must work together. But when the material or technological dimensions change rapidly, the non-material aspects can lag behind in terms of values and norms. This can give rise to a situation of culture lag when the non-material dimensions are unable to match the advances of technology.

Culture and Identity

Identities are not inherited but fashioned both by the individual and the group through their relationship with others. For the individual the social roles that s/he plays imparts identity. Every person in modern society plays multiple roles. For instance within the family s/he may be a parent or a child but for each of the specific roles there are particular responsibilities and powers.

It is not sufficient to enact roles. They also have to be recognised and acknowledged. This can often be done through the recognition of the particular language that is used among role players. Students in schools have their own way of referring to their teachers, other students, class performances. By creating this language which also serves as a code, they create their own world of meanings and significances. Similarly, women are also known to create their own language and through it their own private space beyond the control of men especially when they congregate at the pond to bathe in rural areas or across washing lines on rooftops in urban areas.

In a culture there can be many sub-cultures, like that of the elite and working class youth. Sub-cultures are marked by style, taste and association. Particular sub-cultures are identifiable

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by their speech, dress codes, preference for particular kind of music or the manner in which they interact with their group members.

Sub-cultural groups can also function as cohesive units which impart an identity to all group members. Within such groups there can be leaders and followers but group members are bound by the purpose of the group and work together to achieve their objectives. For instance young members of a neighbourhood can form a club to engage themselves in sports and other constructive activities. Such activities create a positive image of the members in the locality and this gives the members not only a positive self-image but also inspires them to perform better in their activities. The orientation of their identity as a group undergoes a transformation. The group is able to differentiate itself from other groups and thereby create its own identity through the acceptance and recognition of the neighbourhood.

Activity 5

Are you aware of any sub-cultural group in your locality? How are you able to identify them?

Ethnocentrism

It is only when cultures come into contact with one another that the question of ethnocentrism arises. Ethnocentrism is the application of one's own cultural values in evaluating the behaviour and beliefs of people from other cultures. This means that the cultural values projected as the standard or norm are considered superior to that of the beliefs and values of other cultures. We have seen in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 3 (particularly in the discussion on religion) how sociology is an empirical and not a normative discipline.

Underlying ethnocentric comparisons is a sense of cultural superiority clearly demonstrated in colonial situations. Thomas Babbington Macaulay's famous Minute on Education (1835) to the East India Company in India exemplifies ethnocentrism when he says, 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, morals and intellect' (quoted in Mukherji 1948/ 1979:87), (emphasis added).

Ethnocentrism is the opposite of cosmopolitanism, which values other cultures for their difference. A cosmopolitan outlook does not seek to evaluate the values and beliefs of other people according to one's own. It celebrates and accommodates different cultural propensities within its fold and promotes cultural exchange and borrowings to enrich one's own culture. The English language has emerged as a leading vehicle of international communication through its constant inclusion of foreign words into its vocabulary. Again the popularity of Hindi film music can be attributed to its borrowings from western pop music as well as from different traditions of

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Indian folk and semi-classical forms like the *bhangra* and *ghazal*.

A modern society is appreciative of cultural difference and does not close its doors to cultural influences from abroad. But such influences are always incorporated in a distinctive way, which can combine with elements of indigenous culture. The English language despite its foreign inclusions does not become a separate language, nor does Hindi film music lose its character through borrowings. The absorption of diverse styles, forms, sounds and artifacts provides an identity to a cosmopolitan culture. In a global world where modern means of communication are shrinking distances between cultures, a cosmopolitan outlook allows diverse influences to enrich one's own culture.

Cultural Change

Cultural change is the way in which societies change their patterns of culture. The impetus for change can be internal or external. In regard to internal causes, for instance, new methods of farming or agriculture can boost agricultural production, which can transform the nature of food consumption and quality of life of an agrarian community. On the other hand external intervention in the form of conquest or colonisation can also affect deep seated changes in the cultural practices and behaviour of a society.

Cultural change can occur through changes in the natural environment, contact with other cultures or processes of adaptation. Changes in the natural environment or ecology can

Notice the words in the box. Have you heard or used these words in your conversations?

'Hinglish' may soon conquer the world

Some of the Hinglish words in vogue include airdash (travel by air), *chaddis* (underpants), *chai* (Indian tea), crore (10 million), dacoit (thief), *desi* (local), *dicky* (boot), *gora* (white person), *jungli* (uncouth), lakh (100,000), *lampat* (thug), optical (spectacles), prepone (bring forward), stepney (spare tyre) and would-be (fiancé or fiancée). Hinglish contains many words and phrases that Britons or Americans may not easily understand, according to a report... Some are archaic, relics of the Raj, such as 'pukka'. Others are newly coined, such as 'time-pass', meaning an activity that helps kill time. India's success in attracting business has recently produced a new verb. Those whose jobs are outsourced to India are said to have been 'Bangalored'.

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drastically alter the way of life of a people. When forest dwelling communities are deprived of access to the forest and its produce either because of legal restrictions or due to its decimation, it can have disastrous effects on the dwellers and their way of life. Tribal communities in North East India as well as in middle India have been the worst affected by the loss of forest resources.

Along with evolutionary change there can also be revolutionary change. When a culture is transformed rapidly and its values and meaning systems undergo a radical change then revolutionary change takes place. Revolutionary change can be initiated through political intervention, technological innovation or ecological transformation. The French Revolution (1789) transformed French society by destroying the estate system of ranking, abolishing the monarchy, and inculcating the values of liberty, equality and fraternity among its citizens. When a different understanding comes to prevail, culture change occurs. Recent years have seen an amazing expansion of the media, both electronic and print. Do you think the media has brought about an evolutionary or revolutionary change? We are familiar with the various dimensions of culture now. To return to the point we started with in Chapter 1 about the interplay between the individual and society, we now move on to the concept of socialisation.

III

SOCIALISATION

> I believe that a complete life is inclusive of everything around us : plants, cattle, guests, feasts, festivals, quarrels, friendship, companionship, discrimination, scorn. All these and more were present in one single place, my home. Although life sometimes appeared complicated then, I now understand how consummate it was. It is thanks to such a childhood, perhaps, that if I get just a glimpse of someone's suffering, I feel I can comprehend the whole of it (Vaidehi 1945).

At the time of birth, the human infant knows nothing about what we call society or social behaviour. Yet as the child grows up, s/he keeps learning not just about the physical world, but about what it means to be a good or bad girl/boy. S/he knows what kind of behaviour will be applauded and, what kind will be disapproved. Socialisation can be defined as the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which s/he is born. Indeed without socialisation an individual would not behave like a human being. Many of you will be familiar with the story of the 'Wolf-children of Midnapore'. Two small girls were reportedly found in a wolf den in Bengal in 1920. They walked on all four like animals, preferred a diet of raw meat, howled like wolves and lacked any form of speech. Interestingly

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such incidents have been reported from other parts of the world too.

We have so far been talking about socialisation and the new-born infant. But the birth of a child also alters the lives of those who are responsible for its upbringing. They too undergo new learning experiences. Becoming grandparents and parenting involves a whole set of activities and experiences. Older people still remain parents when they become grandparents, of course, thus forging another set of relationships connecting different generations with each other. Likewise the life of a young child changes with the birth of a sibling. Socialisation is a life-long process even though the most critical process happens in the early years, the stage of primary socialisation. Secondary socialisation as we saw extends over the entire life of a person.

While socialisation has an important impact on individuals it is not a kind of 'cultural programming', in which the child absorbs passively the influences with which he or she comes into contact. Even the most recent new-born can assert her/his will. S/he will cry when hungry. And keep crying until those responsible for the infant's care respond. You may have seen how normal, everyday schedules of the family get completely reorganised with the birth of a child.

You have already been introduced to the concepts of status/role, social control, groups and social stratification. You are also acquainted with what culture, norms and values are. All these concepts will help us understand how the process of socialisation takes place. A child, in the first instance, is a member of a family. But s/he is also a member of a larger kin-group (*biradari*, *khaandaan*, a clan etc.) consisting of brothers, sisters and other relatives of the parents. The family into which s/he is born may be a nuclear or extended family. It is also a member of a larger society such as a tribe or sub-caste, a clan or a *biradari,* a religious and linguistic group. Membership of these groups and institutions imposes certain behavioural norms and values on each member. Corresponding to these memberships there are roles that are performed, e.g. that of a son, a daughter, a grandchild or a student. These are multiple roles, which are performed simultaneously. The process of learning the norms, attitudes, values or behavioural patterns of these groups begins early in life and continues throughout one's life.

The norms and values may differ within a society in different families belonging to different castes, regions or social classes or religious groups according to whether one lives in a village or a city or one belongs to a tribe and if to a tribe, to which tribe. Indeed the very language that one speaks depends on the region one comes from. Whether the language is closer to a spoken dialect or to a standardised written form depends on the family and the socio-economic and cultural profile of the family.

Agencies of Socialisation

The child is socialised by several agencies and institutions in which

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s/he participates, viz. family, school, peer group, neighbourhood, occupational group and by social class/caste, region, religion.

Family

Since family systems vary widely, the infants' experiences are by no means standard across cultures. While many of you may be living in what is termed a nuclear family with your parents and siblings, others may be living with extended family members. In the first case, parents may be key socialising agents but in the others grandparents, an uncle or a cousin may be more significant.

Families have varying 'locations' within the overall institutions of a society. In most traditional societies, the family into which a person is born largely determines the individual's social position for the rest of his/her life. Even when social position is not inherited at birth in this way the region and social class of the family into which an individual is born affect patterns of socialisation quite sharply. Children pick up ways of behaviour characteristic of their parents or others in their neighbourhood or community.

Of course, few children simply take over in an unquestioning way the outlook of their parents. This

Activity 6

Suggest ways in which the child of a domestic worker would feel herself different from the child whose family her mother works for. Also, what are the things they might share or exchange?

To start with the obvious, one would have more money spent on clothes, the other might wear more bangles...

They might have watched the same serials, heard the same film songs... they might pick up different kinds of slang from each other...

Now you are left to follow up the difficult areas, like the sense of security within the family, the neighbourhood and on the street...

Activity 7

The presence or absence of which of the items below do you think would affect you most as an individual?

(**possessions**) television set/music system ...

(**space**) a room of your own...

(**time**) having to balance school with household or other work...

(**opportunities**) travel, music classes...

(**people around you**)

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is especially true in the contemporary world, in which change is so pervasive. Moreover, the very existence of a diversity of socialising agencies leads to many differences between the outlooks of children, adolescents and the parental generation. Can you identify any instance where you felt that what you learnt from the family was at variance from your peer group or may be media or even school?

Activity 8

Reflect on your own experience. Compare your interaction with friends to that of your parents and other elders. What is different? Does the earlier discussion on roles and status help you understand the difference?

Peer Groups

Another socialising agency is the peer group. Peer groups are friendship groups of children of a similar age. In some cultures, particularly small traditional societies, peer groups are formalised as age-grades. Even without formal age-grades, children over four or five usually spend a great deal of time in the company of friends of the same age. The word 'peer' means 'equal', and friendly relations established between young children do tend to be reasonably egalitarian. A forceful or physically strong child may to some extent try to dominate others. Yet there is a greater amount of give and take compared to the dependence inherent in the family situation. Because of their power, parents are able (in varying degrees) to enforce codes of conduct upon their children. In peer groups, by contrast, a child discovers a different kind of interaction, within which rules of behaviour can be tested out and explored.

Peer relationships often remain important throughout a person's life. Informal groups of people of similar ages at work, and in other contexts, are usually of enduring importance in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviour.

Schools

Schooling is a formal organisation: there is a definite number of subjects studied. Yet schools are agencies of socialisation in more subtle respects too. Alongside the formal curriculum there is what some sociologists have called a hidden curriculum conditioning children's learning. There are schools in India and in many other countries where girls, but rarely boys, are expected to sweep their classroom. In some schools efforts are made to counter this by making boys and girls do those tasks that are normally not expected of them. Can you think of examples that reflect both trends?

Mass Media

Mass media has increasingly become an essential part of our everyday life. While today the electronic media like the television is expanding, the print media continues to be of great

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importance. Even in the early print media in nineteenth century India, 'conduct-books' instructing women on how to be better house-keepers and more attentive wives were popular in many languages. The media can make the access to information more democratic. Electronic communication is something that can reach a village not connected by road and where no literacy centres have been set up.

There has been much research on the influence of television upon children and adults. A study in Britain showed that the time spent by children watching television is the equivalent of almost a hundred school days a year, and that adults are not far behind them. Apart from such quantitative aspects, what emerges from such research is not always conclusive in its implications. The link between on-screen violence and aggressive behaviour among children is still debated.

If one cannot predict how media influences people, what is certain is the extent of the influence, in terms of both information and exposure to areas of experience distant from one's own. There is a sizeable audience for Indian television serials and films in countries like Nigeria, Afghanistan and among émigrés from Tibet. The televised Mahabharat was aired after dubbing in Tashkent, but even without dubbing was watched in London by children who spoke only English!

Activity 9

You might want to explore how people relate to serials set in surroundings unlike their own. Or if children are watching television with their grandparents, are there disagreements about which programmes are worth watching, and if so, what differences in viewpoint emerge? Are these differences gradually modified?

In recent years, non-print digital media through internet is receiving considerable attention particularly in urban areas.

Other Socialising Agencies

Besides the socialising agencies mentioned, there are other groups, or social contexts, in which individuals spend large parts of their lives. Work is, in all cultures, an important setting within which socialisation processes operate, although it is only in industrial societies that large numbers of people "go out to work" — that is, go each day to places of work quite separate from the home. In traditional communities many people tilled the land close to where they lived or had

Look at the report and discuss how mass media influences children

The Shaktimaan serial telecast a few years ago had children trying to dive down buildings resulting in fatal accidents. "Learning by imitation is a method followed frequently by people and children are no different," says clinical psychologist.

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workshops in their dwellings (see visuals on page 43).

Socialisation and Individual Freedom

It is perhaps evident that socialisation in normal circumstances can never completely reduce people to conformity. Many factors encourage conflict. There may be conflicts between socialising agencies, between school and home, between home and peer groups. However, since the cultural settings in which we are born and come to maturity so influence our behaviour, it might appear that we are robbed of any individuality or free will. Such a view is fundamentally mistaken. The fact that from birth to death we are involved in interaction with others certainly conditions our personalities, the values we hold, and the behaviour in which we engage. Yet socialisation is also at the origin of our very individuality and freedom. In the course of socialisation each of us develops a sense of self-identity, and the capacity for independent thought and action.

How Gendered is Socialisation?

We boys used the streets for so many different things — as a place to stand around watching, to run around and play, try out the manoeuvrability of our bikes. Not so for girls. As we noticed all the time, for girls the street was simply a means to get straight home from school. And even for this limited use of the street they always went in clusters, perhaps because behind their purposeful demeanour they carried the worst fears of being assaulted (Kumar 1986).

Activity 11

We have completed four chapters. Read the text of the next page carefully and discuss the following themes :

- The relation between individual and society in the girl's rebellion against grown-ups.
- How the normative dimensions of culture are different in town and village?
- The question of ascribed status in that the priest's daughter is permitted to touch.
- Conflict between socialising agencies for example in the text note: "thankful none of her school friends could see her like this". Can you find any other sentence that illustrates this?
- Gendered = combing hair + escort + not playing football
- Punishment = "tight-lipped silence" + conspicuous absence of *pappadams*

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An unusual sense of excitement pervaded her visit to the temple this evening. There had been an argument over lunch, between her and the grown-ups, when she had announced her decision to ring the bell in front of the sanctuary.

'If Thangam can ring it, so can I,' she debated hotly.

They protested in shocked voices. 'Thangam is the daughter of the temple priest, she is permitted to touch the bell.'

She responded angrily that Thangam came over to play hide-and-seek every afternoon and behaved no differently from any of them. 'Besides,' she added, goading them deliberately, 'we are equal in the eyes of god.' She was not quite sure whether they had heard this bit, for they had already turned away in disgust. But, after lunch, she caught them whispering about 'that horrid English school she goes to,' which meant that they had heard...

She was sure they had not taken her seriously. That was the trouble with grown-ups: they always presumed that if they told her that she would understand everything when she was older, she would accept their wisdom and authority unquestioningly and not dream of going against them. Oh well, she would show them, this time... Back again at the house, she had to endure the intensely uncomfortable ritual of hairdressing. Her grandmother soothed her hair with what felt like a whole jar of oil, separated each shining strand till it hung limp and straight and lifeless down her back, then tied it up in a tight, skin stretching knot on the top of her head. She was thankful none of her school friends could see her like this....

Why wouldn't they understand how ridiculous she felt, being escorted...She had reminded her mother many times that she walked alone to school everyday when they were back in town... [S]he noticed that the football game had already begun on the courtyard beside the temple of Krishna. She enjoyed watching the players, particularly since her obvious delight in the vigour of the game, and in the raucously voiced comments irritated Kelu Nair profoundly....

She came hurriedly upon the crowded main sanctuary... Before she could regret her decision or go back upon it, she elbowed herself quickly through the circle of women, nearly floundering on the slippery steps. The sight of the big bell above her touched her with a heady excitement. She could distinguish Kelu Nair's frantically whispered threats, but she reached up, rang the bell with one resounding clang and was down the steps before she realised what was happening.

Dimly she was aware of dark looks and subdued murmurs pursuing her as she permitted Kelu Nair to drag her away... She was in dire disgrace. Their tight-lipped silence was infinitely more eloquent than speech, as was the conspicuous absence of her favourite tiny *pappadams* at dinner...

(From *The Bell,* by Gita Krishnakutty)

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Glossary

Cultural Evolutionism : It is a theory of culture, which argues that just like natural species, culture also evolves through variation and natural selection.

Estates System : This was a system in feudal Europe of ranking according to occupation. The three estates were the nobility, clergy and the 'third estate'. The last were chiefly professional and middle class people. Each estate elected its own representatives. Peasants and labourers did not have the vote.

Great Tradition : It comprises of the cultural traits or traditions which are written and widely accepted by the elites of a society who are educated and learned.

Little Tradition : It comprises of the cultural traits or traditions which are oral and operates at the village level.

Self Image : An image of a person as reflected in the eyes of others.

Social Roles : These are rights and responsibilities associated with a person's social position or status.

Socialisation : This is the process by which we learn to become members of society.

Subculture : It marks a group of people within a larger culture who borrow from and often distort, exaggerate or invert the symbols, values and beliefs of the larger culture to distinguish themselves.

Exercises

1. How does the understanding of culture in social science differ from the everyday use of the word 'culture'?
2. How can we demonstrate that the different dimensions of culture comprise a whole?
3. Compare two cultures with which you are familiar. Is it difficult not to be ethnocentric?
4. Discuss two different approaches to studying cultural change.
5. Is cosmopolitanism something you associate with modernity? Observe and give examples of ethnocentrism.
6. What in your mind is the most effective agent of socialisation for your generation? How do you think it was different before?

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Chapter 5

Doing Sociology : Research Methods

I

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why a subject like sociology is called a social science? More than any other discipline, sociology deals with things that are already familiar to most people. All of us live in society, and we already know a lot about the subject matter of sociology — social groups, institutions, norms, relationships and so on— through our own experience. It seems fair, then, to ask what makes the sociologist different from other members of society. Why should s/he be called a social scientist?

As with all scientific disciplines, the crucial element here is method, or the procedures through which knowledge is gathered. For in the final analysis, sociologists can claim to be different from lay persons not because of how much they know or what they know, but because of how they acquire their knowledge. This is one reason for the special importance of method in sociology.

As you have seen in the previous chapters, sociology is deeply interested in the lived experience of people. For example, when studying social phenomena like friendship or religion or bargaining in markets, the sociologist wants to know not only what is observable by the bystander, but also the opinions and feelings of the people involved. Sociologists try to adopt the point of view of people they study, to see the world through their eyes. What does friendship mean to people in different cultures? What does a religious person think he/she is doing when performing a particular ritual? How do shopkeeper and customer interpret each other's words and gestures while bargaining for a better price? The answers to such questions are clearly part of the lived experience of actors involved, and they are of great interest to sociology. This need to understand both the outsider's and the insider's points of view is another reason why method is particularly important in sociology.

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II

Some Methodological Issues

Although it is often used simply as a substitute for (or synonym of) 'method', the word 'methodology' actually refers to the study of method. Methodological issues or questions are thus about the general problems of scientific knowledge-gathering that go beyond any one particular method, technique or procedure. We begin by looking at the ways in which sociologists try to produce knowledge that can claim to be scientific.

Objectivity and Subjectivity in Sociology

In everyday language, the word 'objective' means unbiased, neutral, or based on facts alone. In order to be objective about something, we must ignore our own feelings or attitudes about that thing. On the other hand, the word 'subjective' means something that is based on individual values and preferences. As you will have learnt already, every science is expected to be 'objective', to produce unbiased knowledge based solely on facts. But this is much harder to do in the social sciences than in the natural sciences.

For example, when a geologist studies rocks, or a botanist studies plants, they must be careful not to let their personal biases or preferences affect their work. They must report the facts as they are; they must not (for example) let their liking for a particular scientific theory or theorist influence the results of their research. However, the geologist and the botanist are not themselves part of the world they study, i.e. the natural world of rocks or of plants. By contrast, social scientists study the world in which they themselves live — the social world of human relations. This creates special problems for objectivity in a social science like sociology.

First of all, there is the obvious problem of bias. Because sociologists are also members of society, they will also have all the normal likes and dislikes that people have. A sociologist studying family relations will herself be a member of a family, and her experiences are likely to influence her. Even when the sociologist has no direct personal experience of the group s/he is studying, there is still the possibility of being affected by the values and prejudices of one's own social context. For example, when studying a caste or religious community other than her own, the sociologist may be influenced by the attitudes about that community prevalent in her own past or present social environment. How do sociologists guard against these dangers?

One method is to rigorously and continuously examine one's own ideas and feelings about the subject of research. More generally, the sociologist tries to take an outsider's perspective on her/his own work — she/he tries to look at herself/himself and her/his research through the eyes of others. This technique is called 'self-reflexivity', or sometimes just 'reflexivity'. The sociologist constantly subjects her own

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attitudes and opinions to self-examination. S/he tries to consciously adopt the point of view of others, specially those who are the subjects of her research.

One of the practical aspects of reflexivity is the importance of carefully documenting whatever one is doing. Part of the claims to superiority of research methods lies in the documentation of all procedures and the formal citing of all sources of evidence. This ensures that others can retrace the steps we have taken to arrive at a particular conclusion, and see for themselves if we are right. It also helps us to check and re-check our own thinking or line of argument.

But however, self-reflexive the sociologist tries to be, there is always the possibility of unconscious bias. To deal with this possibility, sociologists explicitly mention those features of their own social background that might be relevant as a possible source of bias on the topic being researched. This alerts readers to the possibility of bias and allows them to mentally 'compensate' for it when reading the research study. (You could go back to Chapter 1, and re-read the section (pp. 7-8) which talks about the difference between common sense and sociology).

Another problem with objectivity in sociology is the fact that, generally, there are many versions of the 'truth' in the social world. Things look different from different vantage points, and so the social world typically involves many competing versions or interpretations of reality. For example, a shopkeeper and a customer may have very different ideas about what is a 'good' price, a young person and an aged person may have very different notions of 'good food', and so on. There is no simple way of judging which particular interpretation is true or more correct, and often it is unhelpful to think in these terms. In fact, sociology tries not to judge in this way because it is really interested in what people think, and why they think what they think.

A further complication arises from the presence of multiple points of view in the social sciences themselves. Like its sister social sciences, sociology too is a 'multi-paradigmatic' science. This

Activity 1

Can you observe yourself as you observe others? Write a short description of yourself as seen from the perspective of: (i) your best friend; (ii) your rival; (iii) your teacher. You must imagine yourself to be these people and think about yourself from their point of view. Remember to describe yourself in the third person — as 'he' or 'she' rather than 'I' or 'me'. Afterwards, you can share similar descriptions written by your classmates. Discuss each others' descriptions — how accurate or interesting do you find them? Are there any surprising things in these descriptions?

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means that competing and mutually incompatible schools of thought coexist within the discipline (Recall the discussion in Chapter 2 about conflicting theories of society).

All this makes objectivity a very difficult and complicated thing in sociology. In fact, the old notion of objectivity is widely considered to be an outdated perspective. Social scientists no longer believe that the traditional notion of an 'objective, disinterested' social science is attainable; in fact such an ideal can actually be misleading. This does not mean that there is no useful knowledge to be obtained via sociology, or that objectivity is a useless concept. It means that objectivity has to be thought of as the goal of a continuous, ongoing process rather than an already achieved end result.

Multiple Methods and Choice of Methods

Since there are multiple truths and multiple perspectives in sociology, it is hardly surprising that there are also multiple methods. There is no single unique road to sociological truth. Of course, different methods are more or less suited to tackle different types of research questions. Moreover, every method has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is thus futile to argue about the superiority or inferiority of different methods. It is more important to ask if the method chosen is the appropriate one for answering the question that is being asked.

For example, if one is interested in finding out whether most Indian families are still 'joint families', then a census or survey is the best method. However, if one wishes to compare the status of women in joint and nuclear families, then interviews, case studies or participant observation may all be appropriate methods.

There are different ways of classifying or categorising various methods commonly used by sociologists. It is conventional, for example, to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods: the former deals in countable or measurable variables (proportions, averages, and the like) while the latter deals with more abstract and hard to measure phenomena like attitudes, emotions and so on. A related distinction is between methods that study observable behaviour and those that study non-observable meanings, values and other interpretational things.

Another way of classifying methods is to distinguish the ones that rely on 'secondary' or already existing data (in the form of documents or other records and artefacts) from those that are designed to produce fresh or 'primary' data. Thus historical methods typically rely on secondary material found in archives, while interviews generate primary data, and so on.

Yet another way of categorisation is to separate 'micro' from 'macro' methods. The former are designed to work in small intimate settings usually with a single researcher; thus the interview and participant observation are thought of as micro methods. Macro methods are those that are able

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to tackle large scale research involving large numbers of respondents and investigators. Survey research is the most common example of a 'macro' method, although some historical methods can also tackle macro phenomena.

Whatever the mode of classification, it is important to remember that it is a matter of convention. The dividing line between different kinds of methods need not be very sharp. It is often possible to convert one kind of method into another, or to supplement one with another.

The choice of method is usually dictated by the nature of the research question being addressed by the preferences of the researcher, and by the constraints of time and/or resources. The recent trend in social science is to advocate the use of multiple methods to bear on the same research problem from different vantage points. This is sometimes referred to as 'triangulation', that is, a process of reiterating or pinpointing something from different directions. In this way, different methods can be used to complement each other to produce a much better result than what might have been possible with each method by itself.

Because the methods most distinctive of sociology are those that are designed to produce 'primary' data, these are the ones stressed here. Even within the category of 'field work' based methods, we shall introduce you to only the most prominent, namely the survey, interview and participant observation.

Participant Observation

Popular in sociology and specially social anthropology, participant observation refers to a particular method by which sociologist learns about society, culture and people that h/she is studying (Recall the discussion on sociology and social anthropology from Chapter 1).

This method is different from others in many ways. Unlike other methods of primary data collection like surveys or interviews, field work involves a long period of interaction with the subjects of research. Typically, the sociologist or social anthropologist spends many months — usually about a year or sometimes more — living among the people being studied as one of them. As a non-native 'outsider', the anthropologist is supposed to immerse himself/herself in the culture of the 'natives' — by learning their language and participating intimately in their everyday life — in an effort to acquire all the explicit and implicit knowledge and skills of the 'insider'. Although the sociologist or anthropologist usually has specific areas of interest, the overall goal of 'participant observation' field work is to learn about the 'whole way of life' of a community. Indeed the model is that of the child: sociologists and anthropologists are supposed to learn everything about their adoptive communities in just the holistic way that small children learn about the world.

Participant observation is often called 'field work'. The term originated

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in the natural sciences, specially those like botany, zoology, geology etc. In these disciplines, scientists could not only work in the laboratory, they had to go out into 'the field' to learn about their subjects (like rocks, insects or plants).

III

Field Work in Social Anthropology

Field work as a rigorous scientific method played a major role in establishing anthropology as a social science. The early anthropologists were amateur enthusiasts interested in exotic primitive cultures. They were 'armchair scholars' who collected and organised information about distant communities (which they had never themselves visited) available from the reports and descriptions written by travellers, missionaries, colonial administrators, soldiers and other 'men on the spot'. For example, James Frazer's famous book, *The Golden Bough,* which inspired many early anthropologists was based entirely on such second hand accounts, as was the work of Emile Durkheim on primitive religion. Towards the end of the 19th and in the first decade of the 20th century many early anthropologists, some of whom were natural scientists by profession, began to carry out systematic surveys and first hand observation of tribal languages, customs, rituals and beliefs. Reliance on second hand accounts began to be thought of as unscholarly, and the good results obtained from first hand work helped cement this growing prejudice (See Box on next page).

Since the 1920s, participant observation or field work has been considered an integral part of social anthropological training and the principal method through which knowledge is produced. Almost all of the influential scholars in the discipline have done such field work — in fact, many communities or geographical places have become famous in the discipline because of their association with classic instances of field work.

What did the social anthropologist actually do when doing fieldwork? Usually, s/he began by doing a census of the community s/he was studying. This involved making a detailed list of all the people who lived in a community, including information such as their sex, age group and family. This could be accompanied by an attempt to map the physical layout of the village or settlement, including the location of houses and other socially relevant sites. One of the important techniques anthropologists use, specially in the beginning stages of their field work is to construct a genealogy of the community. This may be based on the information obtained in the census, but extends much further since it involves creating a family tree for individual members, and extending the family tree as far back as possible. For example, the head of a particular household or family would be asked about his relatives — brothers, sisters, cousins — in his or her own generation;

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Bronislaw Malinowski and the 'Invention' of Field Work

Although he was not the first to use this method — different versions of it had been tried out all over the world by other scholars — Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish anthropologist settled in Britain, is widely believed to have established field work as the distinctive method of social anthropology. In 1914, when the First World War broke out in Europe, Malinowski was visiting Australia, which was a part of the British Empire at that time. Because Poland was annexed by Germany in the war, it was declared an enemy country by Britain, and Malinowski technically became an 'enemy alien' because of his Polish nationality. He was, of course, a respected professor at the London School of Economics and was on very good terms with the British and Australian authorities. But since he was technically an enemy alien, the law required that he be "interned" or confined to a specific place.

Malinowski had anyway wanted to visit several places in Australia and the islands of the South Pacific for his anthropological research, so he requested the authorities to allow him to serve his internment in the Trobriand Islands, a British-Australian possession in the South Pacific. This was agreed to — the Australian government even financed his trip and Malinowski spent a year and a half living in the Trobriand Islands. He lived in a tent in the native villages, learnt the local language, and interacted closely with the 'natives' in an effort to learn about their culture. He maintained careful and detailed records of his observations and also kept a daily diary. He later wrote books on Trobriand culture based on these field notes and diaries; these books quickly became famous and are considered classics even today.

Even before his Trobriand experience, Malinowski had been converted to the belief that the future of anthropology lay in direct and unmediated interaction between the anthropologist and the native culture. He was convinced that the discipline would not progress beyond the status of an intellectual hobby unless its practitioners engaged themselves in systematic first-hand observation preceded by intensive language learning. This observation had to be done in context — that is, the anthropologist had to live among the native people and observe life as it happened rather than interviewing individual natives summoned to the town or outpost for this purpose. The use of interpreters was also to be avoided — it was only when the anthropologist could interact directly with the natives that a true and authentic account of their culture could be produced.

His influential position at the London School of Economics and the reputation of his work in the Trobriand enabled Malinowski to campaign for the institutionalisation of field work as a mandatory part of the training imparted to students of anthropology. It also helped the discipline to gain acceptance as a rigorous science worthy of scholarly respect.

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then about his/her parents' generations — father, mother, their brothers and sisters etc. — then about the grandparents and their brothers, sisters and so on. This would be done for as many generations as the person could remember. The information obtained from one person would be cross-checked by asking other relatives the same questions, and after confirmation, a very detailed family tree could be drawn up. This exercise helped the social anthropologist to understand the kinship system of the community — what kinds of roles different relatives played in a person's life and how these relations were maintained.

A genealogy would help acquaint the anthropologist with the structure of the community and in a practical sense would enable him or her to meet with people and become familiar with the way the community lives. Building on this base, the anthropologist would constantly be learning the language of the community. H/she would also be observing life in the community and making detailed notes in which the significant aspects of community life would be described. Festivals, religious or other collective events, modes of earning a living, family relations, modes of child rearing — these are examples of the kinds of topics that anthropologists would be specially interested in. Learning about these institutions and practices requires the anthropologist to ask endless questions about things that are taken for granted by members of the community. This is the sense in which the anthropologist would be like a child, always asking why, what and so on. In doing this, the anthropologist usually depends on one or two people for most of the information. Such people are called 'informants' or 'principal informants'; in the early days the term *native informant* was also used. Informants act as the anthropologist's teachers and are crucially important actors in the whole process of anthropological research. Equally important are the detailed field notes that the anthropologist keeps during field-work; these notes have to written up every day without fail, and can be supplemented by, or take the form of, a daily diary.

Activity 2

Some famous instances of field work include the following: Radcliffe-Brown on the Andaman Nicobar islands; Evans Pritchard on the Nuer in the Sudan; Franz Boas on various Native American tribes in the USA; Margaret Mead on Samoa; Clifford Geertz on Bali etc.

Locate these places on a map of the world. What do these places have in common? What would it have been like for an anthropologist to live in these places in a 'strange' culture? What could be some of the difficulties they faced?

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IV

Field Work in Sociology

More or less the same techniques are used by sociologists when they do field work. Sociological field work differs not so much in its content — what is done during field-work — but in its context — where it is done — and in the distribution of emphasis across different areas or topics of research. Thus, a sociologist would also live among a community and attempt to become an 'insider'. However, unlike the anthropologist who typically went to a remote tribal community to do field work, sociologists did their field work among all sorts of communities. Moreover, sociological field work did not necessarily involve 'living in', although it did involve spending most of one's time with the members of the community.

For example, William Foote Whyte, an American sociologist, did his field work among members of a street 'gang' in an Italian-American slum in a large city and wrote a famous book *Street Corner Society*. He lived in the area for three and half years 'hanging out' — just spending time together — with members of the gang or group, who were mostly poor unemployed youth, the first American-born generation in a community of immigrants. While this example of sociological field work is very close to anthropological field work, there are important differences (See Box). But sociological field work need not only be this kind — it can take different forms, as in the work of Michael Burawoy, for example, another

Field Work in Sociology – Some Difficulties

Compared to the anthropologist who studies a primitive tribe in a remote part of the world, the student of a modern American community faces distinctly different problems. In the first place, he is dealing with a literate people. It is certain that some of these people, and perhaps many of them, will read his research report. If he disguises the name of the district as I have done, many outsiders apparently will not discover where the study was actually located... The people in the district, of course, know it is about them, and even the changed names do not disguise the individuals for them. They remember the researcher and know the people with whom he associated and know enough about the various groups to place the individuals with little chance of error.

In such a situation the researcher carries a heavy responsibility. He would like his book to be of some help to the people of the district; at least, he wants to take steps to minimise the chances of it doing any harm, fully recognising the possibility that certain individuals may suffer through the publication.

— William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society*, p.342

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American sociologist who worked for several months as a machinist in a Chicago factory and wrote about the experience of work from the perspective of workers.

In Indian sociology, an important way in which fieldwork methods have been used is in village studies. In the 1950s, many anthropologists and sociologists, both Indian and foreign began working on village life and society. The village acted as the equivalent of the tribal community studied by the earlier anthropologists. It was also a 'bounded community', and was small enough to be studied by a single person — that is, the sociologist could get to know almost everyone in the village, and observe life there. Moreover, anthropology was not very popular with nationalists in colonial India because of its excessive concern with the primitive. Many educated Indians felt that disciplines like anthropology carried a colonial bias because they emphasised the non-modern aspects of colonised societies rather than their progressive or positive side. So, studying villages and villagers seemed much more acceptable and worthwhile for a sociologist than studying tribes only. Questions were also being asked about the links between early anthropology and colonialism. After all, the classic instances of field work like that of Malinowski, Evans Pritchard and countless others were made possible by the fact that the places and people where field work was done were part of colonial empires ruled by the countries from where the Western anthropologists came.

However, more than the methodological reasons, village studies were important because they provided Indian sociology with a subject that was of great interest in newly independent India. The government was interested in developing rural India. The national movement and specially Mahatma Gandhi had been actively involved in

Activity 3

If you live in a village: Try to describe your village to someone who has never been there. What would be the main features of your life in the village that you would want to emphasise? You must have seen villages as they are shown in films or on television. What do you think of these villages, and how do they differ from yours? Think also of the cities you have seen which are shown in film or on television: would you want to live in them? Give reasons for your answer.

If you live in a town or a city: Try to describe your neighbourhood to someone who has never been there. What would be the main features of your life in the neighbourhood that you would want to emphasise? How does your neighbourhood differ from (or resemble) city neighbourhoods as shown in film or on television? You must have seen villages being shown in film or on television: would you want to live in them? Give reasons for your answer.

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what were called 'village uplift' programmes. And even urban educated Indians were interested in village life because most of them retained some family and recent historical links to villages. Above all, villages were the places where most Indians lived (and still do). For these reasons village studies became a very important part of Indian sociology, and field work methods were very well suited for studying village society.

Some Limitations of Participant Observation

You have already seen what participant observation can do — its main strength

Different Styles of Doing Village Studies

Village studies became the main preoccupation of Indian sociology during 1950s and 1960s. But long before this time, a very well known village study, *Behind Mud Walls*, was written by William and Charlotte Wiser, a missionary couple who lived for five years in a village in Uttar Pradesh. The Wisers' book emerged as a by-product of their missionary work, although William Wiser was trained as a sociologist and had earlier written an academic book on the *jajmani* system.

The village studies of the 1950s grew out of a very different context and were done in many different ways. The classical social anthropological style was prominent, with the village substituting for the 'tribe' or 'bounded community'. Perhaps the best known example of this kind of field work is reported in M.N. Srinivas's famous book, *The Remembered Village*. Srinivas spent a year in a village near Mysore that he named Rampura. The title of his book refers to the fact that Srinivas's field notes were destroyed in a fire, and he had to write about the village from memory.

Another famous village study of the 1950s was S.C. Dube's *Indian Village*. As a social anthropologist at Osmania University, Dube was part of a multi-disciplinary team — including the departments of agricultural sciences, economics, veterinary sciences and medicine — that studied a village called Shamirpet near Secunderabad. This large collective project was meant not only to study the village but also to develop it. In fact, Shamirpet was meant to be a sort of laboratory where experiments in designing rural development programmes could be carried out.

Yet another style of doing village studies is seen in the *Cornell Village Study Project* of the 1950s. Initiated by Cornell University, the project brought together a group of American social anthropologists, psychologists and linguists to study several villages in the same region of India, namely eastern Uttar Pradesh. This was an ambitious academic project to do multi-disciplinary studies of village society and culture. Some Indian scholars were also involved with this project, which helped train many Americans who later became well known scholars of Indian society.

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is that it provides a very rich and detailed picture of life from the perspective of the 'insider'. It is this insider perspective that is the greatest return on the substantial investment of time and effort that field work demands. Most other research methods cannot claim to have a detailed knowledge of the 'field' over a fairly long period of time — they are usually based on a short and quick field visit. Field work allows for the correction of initial impressions, which may often be mistaken or biased. It also permits the researcher to track changes in the subject of interest, and also to see the impact of different situations or contexts. For example, different aspects of social structure or culture may be brought out in a good harvest year and in a bad harvest year; people could behave differently when employed or unemployed, and so on. Because s/he spends a long period in 'full time' engagement with the field, a participant observer can avoid many of the errors or biases that surveys, questionnaires or short term observation are inevitably subject to.

But like all research methods, field work also has some weaknesses — otherwise all social scientists would be using this method alone!

Field work by its very nature involves very long drawn out and intensive research usually by a single scholar working alone. As such, it can only cover a very small part of the world — generally a single village or small community. We can never be sure whether what the anthropologist or sociologist observed during fieldwork is really very common in the larger community (i.e. in other villages, region, or in the country) or whether it is exceptional. This is probably the biggest disadvantage of field work.

Another important limitation of field work method is that we are never sure whether it is the voice of the anthropologist we are hearing or that of the people being studied. Of course, the aim is to represent the views of the people being studied, but it is always possible that the anthropologist —whether consciously or unconsciously — is selecting what will be written down in his/her notes, and how it will be presented to the readers of his/her books or articles. Because there is no other version available to us except that of the anthropologist, there is always the chance of bias or error. However, this risk is present in most research methods.

More generally, field work methods are criticised because of the one-sided relationship they are based on. The anthropologist/sociologist asks the questions and presents the answers and speaks for 'the people'. To counter this, some scholars have suggested more 'dialogic' formats — that is, ways of presenting field work results where the respondents and people can be more directly involved. In concrete terms, this involves translating the work of the scholar into the language of the community, and asking their opinion of it, and recording their responses. As the social, economic and political distance or gap between the researcher and the researched becomes less wide, there is greater and greater

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chance that the scholar's version will be questioned, qualified, or corrected by the people themselves. This will surely make sociological research more controversial and much more difficult. But in the long run this can only be a good thing because it will help to take social science forward and make it more democratic, thus allowing many more people to participate in producing and critically engaging with 'knowledge'.

Surveys

Survey is probably the best known sociological method, one that is now so much a part of modern public life that it has become commonplace. Today it is used all over the world in all sorts of contexts going well beyond the concerns of sociology alone. In India, too, we have seen the increasing use of surveys for various non-academic purposes, including the prediction of election results, devising of marketing strategies for selling products, and for eliciting popular opinions on a wide variety of subjects.

As the word itself suggests, a survey is an attempt to provide an overview. It is a comprehensive or wide-ranging perspective on some subject based on information obtained from a carefully chosen representative set of people. Such people are usually referred to as 'respondents' — they respond to questions asked of them by the researchers. Survey research is usually done by large teams consisting of those who plan and design the study (the researchers) and their associates and assistants (the latter are called 'investigators' or 'research assistants'). The survey questions may be asked and answered in various forms. Often, they are asked orally during personal visits by the investigator, and sometimes through telephone conversations. Responses may also be sought in writing, to 'questionnaires' brought by investigators or sent through the post. Finally, with the increasing presence of computers and telecommunication technology, these days it is also possible for surveys to be conducted electronically. In this format, the respondent receives and responds to questions by email, the Internet, or similar electronic medium.

Another way is to go to a internet website through links details and fill the format digitally available.

The survey's main advantage as a social scientific method is that it allows us to generalise results for a large population while actually studying only a small portion of this population. Thus a survey makes it possible to study large populations with a manageable investment of time, effort and money. That is why it is such a popular method in the social sciences and other fields.

The sample survey is able to provide a generalisable result despite being selective by taking advantage of the discoveries of a branch of statistics called sampling theory. The key element enabling this 'shortcut' is the representativeness of the sample. How do we go about selecting a representative sample from a given population? Broadly speaking, the sample selection

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The Census and the National Statistical Organisation

The population census of India conducted every ten years is the largest such exercise in the world. (China, the only country with a larger population, does not conduct a regular census.) It involves literally lakhs of investigators and a stupendous amount of logistical organisation not to speak of the huge expenditure incurred by the Government of India. However, in return for this outlay, we get a genuinely comprehensive survey in which every household in India and every one of the more than one billion people living in India get included. Obviously, it is not possible to conduct such a gigantic survey very often; in fact, many developed countries no longer conduct a full census; instead they depend on sample surveys for their population data, because such surveys have been found to be very accurate. In India, the National Statistical Organisation (NSO) conducts sample surveys every year on the levels of family expenditure, employment and unemployment (and other subjects). Every five years it also conducts a bigger survey involving about 1.2 lakh households covering more than 6 lakh persons all over India. In absolute terms this is considered a large sample, and the NSO surveys are among the biggest regularly conducted surveys in the world. However, since the total population of India is over one billion you can see that the five-yearly survey of the NSO involves a sample that is only about 0.06 per cent or just over one twentieth of one per cent — of the Indian population! But because it is scientifically selected to be representative of the total population, the NSO sample is able to estimate population characteristics despite being based on such a tiny proportion.

process depends on two main principles.

The first principle is that all the relevant sub-groups in the population should be recognised and represented in the sample. Most large populations are not homogenous — they belong to distinct sub-categories. This is called stratification (Note that this is a statistical notion of stratification which is different from the sociological concept of stratification that you have studied in Chapter 4). For example, when considering the population of India, we must take account of the fact that this population is divided into rural and urban sectors which are very different from each other. When considering the rural population of any one state, we have to allow for the fact that this population lives in villages of different sizes. In the same way, the population of a single village may be stratified by class, caste, gender, age, religion or other criteria. In short, the notion of stratification tells us that the representativeness of a sample depends on its being able to reflect the characteristics of all the relevant strata in a given population. Which kinds of strata are considered relevant depends on the specific objectives of the research study. For example, when doing research on attitudes towards religion, it would be important to include members of all religions. When

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researching attitudes towards trade unions it would be important to consider workers, managers and industrialists, and so on.

The second principle of sample selection is that the actual unit — i.e. person or village or household — should be based purely on chance. This is referred to as randomisation, which itself depends on the concept of probability. You may have come across the idea of probability in mathematics course. Probability refers to the chance (or the odds) of an event happening. For example, when we toss a coin, it can fall with the 'head' side up or the 'tail' side up. With normal coins, the chance — or probability — of heads or tails appearing is exactly the same, that is 50 per cent each. Which of the two events actually happens when you toss the coin — i.e. whether it comes up heads or tails — depends purely on chance and nothing else. Events like this are called random events.

We use the same idea in selecting a sample. We try to ensure that the actual person or household or village chosen to be part of the sample is chosen purely by chance and nothing else. Thus, being chosen in the sample is a matter of luck, like winning a lottery. It is only if this is true that the sample will be a representative sample. If a survey team chooses only villages that are near the main highway in their sample, then the sample is not a random or chance sample but a purposive one. Similarly, if we choose mostly middle class households, or households that we know, then the sample is again likely to be purposive. The point is that after the relevant strata in a population are identified, the actual choosing of sample households or respondents should be a matter of pure chance. This can be ensured in various ways. Different techniques are used to achieve this, the common ones being drawing of lots (or lottery), rolling of dice, the use of random number tables specially produced for this purpose, and more recently, random numbers generated by calculators or computers.

To understand how a survey sample is actually selected, let us take a concrete example. Suppose we wish to examine the hypothesis that living in smaller and more intimate communities produces greater intercommunity harmony than living in larger, more impersonal communities. For the sake of simplicity, let us suppose we are interested only in the rural sector of a single state in India. The simplest possible sample selection process would begin with a list of all villages in the state along with their population (Such a list could be obtained from the census data). Then we would decide on the criteria for defining 'small' and 'large' villages. From the original list of villages we now eliminate all the 'medium' villages, i.e. those that are neither small nor big. Now we have a revised list stratified by size of village. Given our research question, we want to give equal weightage to each of the strata, i.e. small and big villages, so we decide to select 10 villages from each. To do this, we number the list of small and

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big villages, and randomly select 10 numbers from each list by drawing lots. We now have our sample, consisting of 10 big and 10 small villages from the state, and we can proceed to study those villages to see if our initial hypothesis was true or false.

Of course, this is an extremely simple design; actual research studies usually involve more complicated designs with the sample selection process being divided into many stages and incorporating many strata. But the basic principles remain the same — a small sample is carefully selected such that it is able to represent or stand for the entire population. Then the sample is studied and the results obtained for it are generalised to the entire population. The statistical properties of a scientifically selected sample ensure that the characteristics of the sample will closely resemble the characteristics of the population it is drawn from. There may be small differences, but the chance of such deviations occuring can be specified. This is known as the margin of error, or sampling error. It arises not due to any mistakes made by researchers but because we are using a small sample to stand for a large population. When reporting the results of sample surveys, researchers must specify the size and design of their sample and the margin of error.

The main strength of the survey method is that it is able to provide a broad overview representative of a large population with relatively small outlays of time and money. The bigger the sample the more chance it has of being truly representative; the extreme case here is that of the census, which includes the entire population. In practice, sample sizes may vary from 30-40 to many thousands. (See the box on the National Statistical Organisation). It is not only the size of the sample that matters; its mode of selection is even more important. Of course, decisions on sample selection can often be based on practical considerations.

In situations where a census is not feasible the survey becomes the only available means of studying the population as a whole. The unique advantage of the survey is that it

Activity 4

Discuss among yourselves some of the surveys you have come across. These may be election surveys, or other small surveys by newspapers or television channels. When the results of the survey were reported, was the margin of error also mentioned? Were you told about the size of the sample and how it was selected? You must always be suspicious of surveys where these aspects of the research method are not clearly specified, because without them, it is not possible to evaluate the findings. Survey methods are often misused in the popular media: big claims are made on the basis of biased and unrepresentative sample. You could discuss some specific surveys you have come across from this point of view.

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Activity 5

How would you go about selecting a representative sample for a survey of all students in your school if the objective of the survey were to answer the following questions:

(i) Do students with many brothers and sisters do better or worse in studies compared to those with only one brother or sister (or none)?

(ii) What is the most popular break-time activity for students in the primary school (Classes I-V), middle school (Classes VI-VIII), secondary school (Classes IX-X) and senior secondary school (Classes XI-XII)?

(iii) Is a student's favourite subject likely to be the subject taught by the favourite teacher? Is there any difference between boys and girls in this regard?

(Note: Make different sample designs for each of these questions).

Aggregate Statistics: the Alarming Decline in the Sex Ratio

You have read about the sharp fall in the sex ratio in Chapter 3. In recent decades, fewer and fewer girls are being born relative to the number of boys, and the problem has reached worrying levels in states such as Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh.

The (juvenile, or child) sex ratio is expressed as the number of girls per 1,000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years. This ratio has been falling steadily over the decades both for India as a whole and for many states in particular. Here are some of the average juvenile sex ratios for India and selected states as recorded in the Census of 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Number of girls per 1,000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years

	1991	*2001*	*2011*
India	945	927	914
Punjab	875	798	846
Haryana	879	819	830
Delhi	915	868	866
Gujarat	928	883	890
Himachal Pradesh	951	896	906

https://updateox.com/india/child-sex-ratio-in-india-state-wise-data/
(This source is secured)

The child sex ratio is an aggregate (or macro) variable that only becomes visible when you collate (or put together) statistics for large populations. We cannot tell by looking at individual families that there is such a severe problem. The relative proportion of boys and girls in any individual family could always be compensated by a different proportion in other families we have not looked at. It is only by using methods like a census or large scale survey that the overall ratio for the community as a whole can be calculated and the problem can be identified. Can you think of other social issues that can only be studied by surveys or censuses?

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provides an aggregated picture, that is, a picture based on a collectivity rather than on single individuals taken separately. Many social problems and issues become visible only at this aggregative level — they cannot be identified at the more micro levels of investigation.

However, like all research methods, survey also has its disadvantages. Although it offers the possibility of wide coverage, this is at the cost of depth of coverage. It is usually not possible to get in-depth information from respondents as part of a large survey. Because of the large number of respondents, the time spent on each must be limited. Moreover, since the survey questionnaire is being taken around to respondents by a relatively large number of investigators, it becomes difficult to ensure that complicated questions or those requiring detailed prompting will be asked of all respondents in exactly the same way. Differences in the way questions are asked or answers recorded could introduce errors into the survey. That is why the questionnaire for a survey (sometimes called a 'survey instrument') has to be designed very carefully — since it will be handled by persons other than the researchers themselves, there is little chance of corrections or modifications in the course of its use.

Given that there is no long-term relationship between investigator and respondent and hence no familiarity or trust, questions that can be asked in a survey have to be of the kind that can be asked and answered between strangers. Questions of a personal or sensitive kind cannot be asked, or if asked are likely to be answered 'safely' rather than truthfully. These kinds of problems are sometimes refered to as 'non-sampling errors', that is, errors due not to the sampling process but to faults or shortcomings of the research design or the manner in which it was implemented. Unfortunately, some of these errors are difficult to foresee and guard against, so that it is possible for surveys to go wrong and produce misleading or false estimates of the characteristics of a population. Ultimately, the most important limitation of survey is that, in order to be successful, it must depend on a tightly structured inflexible questionnaire. Moreover, howsoever well designed the questionnaire might be, its success depends finally on the nature of the interactions between investigators and respondents, and specially on the goodwill and cooperation of the latter.

Interview

An interview is basically a guided conversation between the researcher and the respondent. Although it has few technicalities associated with it, the simplicity of the format can be deceptive because it actually takes a lot of practice and skill to become a good interviewer. Interview occupies the ground between a structured questionnaire of the type used in surveys, and the completely open-ended interactions typical of participant observation methods.

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Its chief advantage is the extreme flexibility of the format. Questions can be re-phrased or even stated differently; the order of subjects or questions can be changed according to the progress (or lack of progress) in the conversation; subjects that are producing good material can be extended and built upon others that provoke unfavourable reactions can be cut short or postponed to a later occasion, and all this can be done during the course of the interview itself.

On the other hand, many of the disadvantages of the interview as a research method are also related to its advantages. The very same flexibility can also make interview vulnerable to changes of mood on the part of respondent, or to lapses of concentration on the part of interviewer. It is in this sense an unstable and unpredictable format — it works very well when it works, and fails miserably when it doesn't.

There are different styles of interviewing and opinions and experiences differ as to their relative advantages. Some prefer a very loosely structured format, with only a check-list of topics rather than actual questions; others like to have more structure, with specific questions to be asked of all respondents. How interview is recorded can also differ according to circumstances and preferences, ranging from actual video or audio recording, detailed note taking during interview, or relying on memory and writing up the interview after it is concluded. The introduction of equipment like recorders and so on frequently makes the respondent uneasy and introduces a degree of formality into the conversation. On the other hand, important information can sometimes go unnoticed or not be recorded at all when other less comprehensive methods of record keeping are being employed. Sometimes the physical or social circumstances in which the interview is being conducted determine the mode of recording. The way in which the interview is later written for publication or as part of a research report can also differ widely. Some researchers prefer to edit the transcript and present a 'cleaned up' continuous narrative; others wish to retain the flavour of the original conversation as much as possible and therefore include all the asides and digressions as well.

The interview is often used along with or as a supplement to other methods, specially participant observation and surveys. Long conversations with 'key informants' (the main informant in a participant observation study) can often provide a concentrated account that situates and clarifies the accompanying material. Similarly, intensive interviews can add depth and detail to the findings of a survey. However, as a method, the interview is dependent on personalised access and the degree of rapport or mutual trust between the respondent and the researcher.

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Glossary

Census : A comprehensive survey covering every single member of a population.

Genealogy : An extended family tree outlining familial relations across generations.

Non-sampling Error : Errors in survey results due to mistakes in the design or application of methods.

Population : In the statistical sense, the larger body (of persons, villages, households, etc.) from which a sample is drawn.

Probability : The likelihood or odds of an event occuring (in the statistical sense).

Questionnaire : A written list of questions to be asked in a survey or interview.

Randomisation : Ensuring that an event (such as the selection of a particular item in the sample) depends purely on chance and nothing else.

Reflexivity : The researcher's ability to observe and analyse oneself.

Sample : A subset or selection (usually small) drawn from and representing a larger population.

Sampling Error : The unavoidable margin of error in the results of a survey because it is based on information from only a small sample rather than the entire population.

Stratification : According to the the statistical sense, the subdivision of a population into distinct groups based on relevant criteria such as gender, location, religion, age etc.

Exercises

1. Why is the question of a scientific method particularly important in sociology?
2. What are some of the reasons for 'objectivity' being more complicated in social sciences, particularly disciplines like sociology?
3. How do sociologists try to deal with difficulties in "objectivity" and strive for objectivity?
4. What is meant by 'reflexivity' and why is it important in sociology?
5. What are some of the things that ethnographers and sociologists do during participant observation?

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6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of participant observation as a method?
7. What are the basic elements of the survey method? What is chief advantage of this method?
8. Describe some of the criteria involved in selecting a representative sample.
9. State some of the weaknesses of the survey method.
10. Describe main features of the interview as a research method.

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